

Pharyngitis

Sample Responses to Patient Portal Messages

The following are examples of asynchronous messages (e.g., MyChart messages) received by telemedicine clinicians for patients diagnosed with pharyngitis. The messages below assume a diagnosis of pharyngitis has been established after a virtual visit. The responses below assume the clinician is responding to the patient. Patients should be strongly discouraged from sending asynchronous messages for urgent concerns. Please pay special attention to suggested responses that differ by age.

Responses Intended for Adult Patients

- **“I was told I have viral pharyngitis. How long will the throat pain last?”**
 - **Possible response:** Usually, a sore throat starts to improve in about 3 days. It usually goes away in about 7–10 days. However, mild sore throat syndromes may last a bit longer.¹⁻²
- **“I was told I have strep throat. How long will the throat pain last?”**
 - **Possible response:** With strep throat, the sore throat usually starts to improve in 3 days. Symptoms usually improve within 1–2 days of starting antibiotics.³⁻⁵
- **“Can you remind me what I can do to reduce my throat pain?”**
 - **Possible response:** Several things can make you feel better. Warm tea, throat lozenges, and drinking fluids can help. Pain relievers like acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (e.g., Motrin®, Advil®) can also reduce pain and inflammation. Rest your voice and avoid cigarette smoke and dry air.⁶⁻⁷
- **“Is pharyngitis contagious? When can I go back to work?”**
 - **Possible response:** Pharyngitis can be contagious, especially if it’s viral or caused by strep. Stay home until your fever is gone and you’re mostly feeling better. If you’re on antibiotics for strep, you’re usually not contagious after 24 hours of treatment. Washing your hands and not sharing utensils or drinks also helps prevent spread.³⁻⁵
- **“When should I see a clinician again?”**
 - **Possible response:** If you are improving, you do not need to see a clinician again. However, you should see a clinician in person if you aren’t feeling a little better after your third day of being sick or if your sore throat gets worse instead of improving. Go to an emergency department if you have any trouble breathing, difficulty swallowing, severe pain when opening the mouth, drooling, or swelling in the neck or face. Those could be signs of a more serious infection that needs care right away.

Responses Intended for Family Members of Pediatric Patients

- **“I was told my child has viral pharyngitis. How long will the throat pain last?”**
 - **Possible response:** Most of the time, a sore throat starts to improve in about 3 days. It usually goes away in about 7–10 days.¹⁻²
- **“I was told my child has strep throat. How long will the throat pain last?”**
 - **Possible response:** With strep throat, the sore throat usually starts to improve in 3 days. Symptoms usually improve within 1–2 days of starting antibiotics.³⁻⁵
- **“Can you remind me what I can do to reduce my child’s throat pain?”**
 - **Possible response:** Several things can ease your child’s sore throat. Make sure they’re drinking plenty of fluids, especially warm drinks like broth, warm water with lemon, or herbal tea. Cool treats like ice pops or cold water can help numb the throat. You can give them acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (e.g., Motrin®, Advil®). Always follow the instructions on the label to make sure you are giving the right dose. If your child is at least 5 years old, you can give them warm saltwater gargles or throat lozenges, hard candy, or ice chips. And of course, plenty of rest is important while their body fights off the infection.⁶⁻⁷
- **“Is pharyngitis contagious? When can my child go back to daycare/school?”**
 - **Possible response:** Pharyngitis can be contagious, especially if it’s viral or caused by strep. Have your child stay home until their fever is gone and they are mostly feeling better. If your child is on antibiotics for strep, they’re usually not contagious after 24 hours of treatment. Washing your child’s hands and not sharing their utensils or drinks also helps prevent spread.³⁻⁵
- **“When should my child see a clinician again?”**
 - **Possible response:** Your child should see a clinician in person if they aren’t feeling a little better after their third day of being sick or if their sore throat gets worse instead of improving. Go to an emergency department if your child has any trouble breathing, difficulty swallowing, severe pain when opening the mouth, drooling, or swelling in the neck or face. These could be signs of a more serious infection that needs care right away.

References

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