



Dr Wolfgang Muller (Consultant Paediatrician)

Parent Information Guide:

Herpangina:

What is herpangina?

Herpangina is a common viral infection in children. It causes small painful blisters or ulcers at the back of the mouth and throat, often with a fever and sore throat.

It is most often caused by enteroviruses, including Coxsackie viruses. It is similar to hand, foot and mouth disease, but in herpangina the ulcers are usually mainly at the back of the mouth and throat.

Common symptoms

Children with herpangina may have:

- Fever, sometimes high
- Sore throat
- Pain when swallowing
- Small blisters or ulcers at the back of the mouth, throat, tonsils, or soft palate
- Reduced appetite
- Drinking less than usual
- Tiredness or irritability
- Headache or tummy ache

Symptoms usually improve within about 7 days.

How is it spread?

Herpangina is contagious. It can spread through saliva, coughs and sneezes, close contact, and contact with stool, especially if hands are not washed well after using the toilet or changing nappies.

Good hand hygiene is the best way to reduce spread.



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Treatment

There is no specific antibiotic treatment because herpangina is caused by a virus. Treatment is aimed at keeping your child comfortable and well hydrated.

You can help by:

- Offering frequent small drinks
- Giving cold drinks, ice lollies, or soft cool foods if helpful
- Offering soft foods such as yoghurt, smoothies, soup, mashed foods, or ice cream
- Avoiding acidic, spicy, salty, or rough foods, such as citrus fruits, crisps, or fizzy drinks, as these may sting
- Giving paracetamol or ibuprofen for pain or fever, if suitable for your child and according to the dose instructions

Do not give aspirin to children.

Antibiotics do not help herpangina unless there is a separate bacterial infection, which is uncommon.

Fluids are more important than food

It is normal for children to eat less for a few days. This is usually not a problem as long as they are drinking enough.

Encourage small, frequent sips. Younger children may manage better with a spoon, syringe, cup, or straw. Oral rehydration solution from a pharmacy can be useful if your child is not drinking well.

When can my child return to nursery or school?

Children should stay at home while they have a fever, feel unwell, or cannot manage normal activities.

Once your child is well enough, drinking adequately, and the fever has settled, they can usually return to nursery or school. Good handwashing remains important, as some viruses can continue to be passed in stool for a while after symptoms improve.



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When to seek help:

Enclosed is a link to further parent information:

Parent information on “My child is unwell – When should I see a doctor?”

<https://drwmuller.com/information-for-parents-carers/>

See: Emergencies: “When do I need to see a doctor urgently?”

Key message

Herpangina is usually a short-lived viral illness. Most children recover with fluids, pain relief, and time. The most important thing is to keep your child drinking and to watch for signs of dehydration.

Written by: Dr W Muller

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