



Sore throat and hoarseness - what causes them?

Sore throat is a common illness, almost every third person suffers from it at least once a year. A sore throat often occurs as part of a flu, thus when suffering from common cold. In this case, the infection affects the pharynx also and leads to an inflammation that is medically described as acute pharyngitis. Hoarseness occurs when the larynx and vocal folds located therein get inflamed. Sore throat and hoarseness are particularly frequent in the cold season and usually occur together.

How do sore throat and hoarseness develop?

Similar to common cold, even acute throat infections are mainly caused by viruses. The viruses cause an inflammation of the mucous membranes of the pharynx, which then triggers a sore throat. The lymph nodes in the throat and the pharynx region may swell while resisting the infection and could be sensitive to pressure. Hoarseness develops through a swelling of the mucous membranes on the vocal folds, which can then no longer open and close completely. Therefore the voice becomes raw and husky, fainter and sounds as if coming from a distance.

How do acute sore throat and hoarseness develop?

Pharyngitis usually starts with a feeling of dryness in the throat - an irritation or a burning sensation that triggers a constant clearing of the throat and makes swallowing difficult for the patient. The main symptom appears shortly thereafter: sore throat that intensifies while swallowing. It is frequently accompanied by catarrh, coughing and fever. Hoarseness is characterized by a raw, husky voice of low volume. Sometimes the patient can only whisper, sometimes the voice goes away completely. An acute sore throat generally gets cured within three to five days on its own and without leaving any aftereffects.

Acute sore throat and hoarseness - What can I do?

An acute sore throat has a high probability of getting cured on its own so that in principle, a purely symptomatic treatment is sufficient. Taking adequate rest, drinking lots of fluids and avoiding smoking help in its cure. It is important to protect the voice in case of hoarseness. Gargling with salt water, sage tea or camomile tea can alleviate a sore throat - although these measures have hardly been tested scientifically. The same is applicable for moist warm throat compresses, lozenges without drug content and herbal supplements. Painkillers may also be helpful. Lozenges, gargling solutions or throat solutions that contain locally acting anesthetics and/or antiseptics, are rather not recommended as they are unable to enter deep into the mucous membrane, where the inflammation is present.