University Hospitals Dorset
NHS Foundation Trust

Tonsillitis and glandular fever

Patient information

What are tonsillitis and glandular fever?

Tonsillitis is when the tonsils become inflamed and may be caused by a virus or bacteria. The most common bacteria known to cause this, is group A beta-haemolytic streptococcus, often known as strep A.

Glandular fever, otherwise known as infectious mononucleosis, is a viral illness caused by the Epstein-Barr virus (EBV). Glandular fever is mostly spread through saliva, for example kissing, exposure to coughs and sneezes, and sharing eating utensils and toothbrushes.

Signs and symptoms

A high temperature (fever), sore throat, enlarged tonsils with pus, swollen glands in your neck, fatigue (extreme tiredness), and a headache or earache.

Treatment

During your stay in the ear, nose, and throat (ENT) same day emergency care (SDEC) you will be reviewed by an advanced clinical practitioner (ACP).

You will have blood tests to check your infection markers (the level of infection showing in your blood). You may also have a blood test for glandular fever.

You may also be given some intravenous antibiotics (directly into a vein through a cannula), fluids, or steroids to reduce the inflammation and hydrate you.

We will aim to get you home on the same day -however you may need to be admitted and have further treatment.

If you experience any difficulty breathing after leaving, please go to the emergency department urgently.

Advice for discharge

- If antibiotics are provided, you must complete the full course to prevent a further infection
- Please avoid drinking alcohol.
- Regularly wash your hands.
- You will be advised on pain relief to take.
- It is very important that you eat as normal and drink plenty.
- You will be advised to rest for around a week. Please let the nurse know if you need a sick note.
- If you are a smoker, now is the perfect time to consider giving up or reducing the amount you smoke, your GP can provide you with advice.
- Please remember that unless you are told otherwise, your first contact in the community is your GP.

If you have glandular fever:

- Please avoid sharing cutlery and kissing others.
- Your symptoms may last for up to six weeks.
- There is a chance that your liver and spleen might be swollen after glandular fever, so it is advisable to avoid any kind of contact sports and to avoid drinking alcohol for a couple of months.
- There is a possibility that your liver function test results might be abnormal. If this is the case, you might need to get a repeat blood test, including liver function test, in six weeks at your GP surgery.

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