

Managing sore throat in the pharmacy



Learning objectives:

Refresh knowledge of the causes and symptoms of sore throat



Understand how benzydamine hydrochloride works



Be able to recommend an appropriate product to manage sore throat.

Sore throats are common and are usually caused by a viral infection of the upper respiratory tract, such as a cold or influenza. Very occasionally they can be caused by a bacterial infection. Sore throats can also be caused by laryngitis, tonsillitis, strep throat (a bacterial throat infection) or glandular fever.¹ The highest incidence of sore throat is in children during the winter months.²

A sore throat due to a viral or bacterial cause is usually a self-limiting condition; symptoms resolve within one week in 85% of people.³ Customers should be advised to see their GP if their symptoms have not improved after one week.⁴

Symptoms of sore throat include a painful throat, especially when swallowing; a dry, scratchy throat; and redness in the back of the mouth. Other symptoms include bad breath, a mild cough and swollen neck glands. Symptoms are similar for children, but they can also have a temperature and appear less active.¹



Managing sore throat

NICE recommends that customers presenting with sore throat should be advised that:⁵



Adequate fluid should be taken during the course of the illness to keep the throat moist and prevent dehydration



Medicated lozenges containing a local anaesthetic, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) or an antiseptic agent may provide temporary relief from throat pain.



Ibuprofen or paracetamol can be used to help relieve the pain and discomfort of a sore throat as well as reducing fever.

Benzydamine hydrochloride

Benzydamine hydrochloride is an NSAID that has a different mechanism of action from other aspirin-like NSAIDs, providing triple action relief from sore throat.

Triple action relief



Anti-inflammatory
to support the body's natural healing process and help customers feel better sooner.



Analgesic
to relieve the pain from a sore throat quickly and effectively.



Anaesthetic
to soothe a sore throat so customers can get on with their day.

When to refer customers

Most sore throats can be managed with advice and product recommendations from the pharmacy team. However, it is important to know when customers should be referred to their GP.



WWHAM	When to refer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Customer has a weakened immune system or is undergoing chemotherapy¹ <p><i>Note that benzydamine can very rarely cause bronchospasm so should be used with caution by customers with asthma⁶</i></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Customer appears significantly unwell● Customer gets sore throats frequently● Signs of a more serious medical condition● Has high risk of complications^{1,5}
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Customer has had symptoms for longer than one week with no improvement⁴
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Customer has tried pain relief or medicated lozenges/sprays, and seen no improvement after three days⁵
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● On any other medication; look out for carbimazole, methotrexate or other DMARDs (disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs)⁵

References: 1. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/sore-throat/> 2. <https://cks.nice.org.uk/topics/sore-throat-acute/background-information/prevalence/> 3. <https://cks.nice.org.uk/topics/sore-throat-acute/background-information/prognosis/> 4. Duerden, M., Benkinsopp, A. and Blenkinsopp, J. (2018). Symptoms in the Pharmacy (8th Edition) 5. <https://cks.nice.org.uk/topics/sore-throat-acute/management/management/> 6. <https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/product/827/smpc/print>

Online references last accessed February 2024.

Date of preparation: February 2024.

The Difflam product range

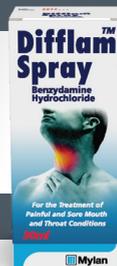


Difflam has a range of products that you can recommend to customers based on their personal preference.

Difflam Spray

- Fast acting, long lasting relief of sore throat pain
- Triple action: Anti-inflammatory, Analgesic, Anaesthetic
- Directly targets the site of pain
- Suitable for adults and children of all ages
- Sugar, lactose and gluten free

Benzydamine hydrochloride
0.15% w/v | P



Benzydamine hydrochloride
0.15% w/v | P

Difflam Sore Throat Rinse

- Fast acting, long lasting relief of sore throat pain
- Triple action: Anti-inflammatory, Analgesic, Anaesthetic
- Includes measuring cup for accurate dosing
- Suitable for adults and children over 12 years old
- Sugar, lactose and gluten free

Difflam 3mg Lozenges are also available
Benzydamine hydrochloride 3mg | P

Want to learn more about effectively managing sore throat?

Visit pharmacy.magazine.co.uk/ Difflam and complete the e-module



ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Difflam™ 3mg Lozenges (benzydamine hydrochloride) Lemon and Orange-Honey flavour

Presentation: Difflam 3mg Lozenges, contains 3mg of benzydamine hydrochloride equivalent to 2.68 mg of benzydamine. **Indications:** Difflam is indicated in adults and children over 6 years of age for symptomatic local treatment for the relief of pain and irritation of mouth and throat. **Dosage and Administration:** For oropharyngeal use. Adults and children over 6 years of age: one lozenge 3 times a day. Lozenge should be dissolved slowly in the mouth. Do not swallow. Do not chew. The treatment must not exceed 7 days. **Contraindication:** Hypersensitivity to the active substance or to any of the excipients. **Warnings and Precautions:** Benzydamine use is not advisable in patients with hypersensitivity to salicylic acid or other NSAIDs. Bronchospasm may be precipitated in patients suffering from or with a previous history of bronchial asthma. Caution should be exercised in these patients. In a minority of patients, buccal/pharyngeal ulceration may be caused by serious disease processes. Patients whose symptoms worsen or do not improve within 3 days, or who appear feverish or have other symptoms, must therefore seek the advice of their doctor or dentist as appropriate. Difflam Lozenges contain: Aspartame and Isomalt; aspartame is hydrolysed to phenylalanine which may be harmful for people with phenylketonuria. Isomalt is unsuitable for patients with rare hereditary problems of fructose intolerance and so should not take this medicine. **Interactions:** Not Known. **Pregnancy and lactation:** Difflam Lozenges should not be used in pregnancy or lactation. **Undesirable effects:** Serious (frequency not known): Anaphylactic reaction which can be potentially life-threatening, Hypersensitivity reactions, Hypoaesthesia oral, (Uncommon); Photosensitivity, (Rare); Burning mouth, Dry mouth, (Very rare); Laryngospasm, Angioedema. **Basic price (UK):** RRP 20 lozenges £7.59 **Product licence number:** Lemon flavour PL 60682/0011, Orange-Honey flavour PL 60682/0013. **Legal Category:** P.

Difflam™ 0.15% w/v Spray (benzydamine hydrochloride)

Presentation: Difflam™ Spray contains benzydamine hydrochloride 0.15% w/v. Each metered dose pump spray delivers approximately 175mcl per puff. **Indications:** Difflam™ Spray is a locally acting analgesic and anti-inflammatory treatment for the throat and mouth. It is especially useful for the relief of pain in traumatic conditions such as following surgical removal of tonsils or the use of a naso-gastric tube; dental surgery. **Dosage and administration:** Adults and elderly: 4 to 8 puffs, 1½ to 3 hourly. Children aged 6-12: 4 puffs, 1½ to 3 hourly. Children under 6: One puff per 4kg body weight, up to a maximum 4 puffs, 1½ to 3 hourly. **Contra-indications:** Patients with known hypersensitivity to ingredients. **Warnings and Precautions:** Not advisable in patients with hypersensitivity to acetylsalicylic acid or other NSAIDs. Bronchospasm may be precipitated in patients suffering from or with a previous history of bronchial asthma. Caution should be exercised in these patients. The small amount of alcohol in this medicine will not have any noticeable effects. Some inactive ingredients may cause allergic reactions. Avoid contact with the eyes. **Interactions:** None known. **Pregnancy and lactation:** Difflam™ Spray should not be used in pregnancy or lactation unless considered essential by the physician. There is no evidence of a teratogenic effect in animal studies. **Undesirable effects:** Serious (frequency not known): Anaphylactic reaction which can be potentially life-threatening. Hypersensitivity reactions. Angioedema (Uncommon). Oral tissue numbness or 'stinging' sensations in the mouth may occur which may disappear on continuing treatment. (Very rare); pruritus, rash, urticaria, photosensitivity reaction, laryngospasm / bronchospasm. Prescribers should consult the Summary of Product Characteristics in relation to side-effects. **Special precautions for storage:** Do not store above 30°C. Do not refrigerate or freeze. Keep out of reach of children. **Basic price (UK):** RRP 30ml spray £8.49. **Marketing Authorization number:** PL 60682/0016 **Legal category:** P.

Difflam™ Sore Throat Rinse & Difflam™ Oral Rinse (benzydamine hydrochloride)

Presentation: Difflam™ Sore Throat Rinse & Difflam™ Oral Rinse contain benzydamine hydrochloride 0.15% w/v. Presented as a gargle/oral rinse in a 200ml and 300ml glass bottle respectively. **Indications:** Locally acting analgesic and anti-inflammatory treatment for the relief of painful inflammatory conditions of the throat including pharyngitis. **Dosage and administration:** Rinse or gargle with 15ml (using measuring cup provided) every 1½-3 hours as required. Expel solution from the mouth after use. If stinging occurs the rinse may be diluted with water. Uninterrupted treatment should not exceed seven days, except under medical supervision. It is not suitable for children aged 12 years or under. **Contra-indications:** Patients with hypersensitivity to ingredients. **Warnings and Precautions:** Not advisable in patients with hypersensitivity to acetylsalicylic acid or other NSAIDs. Bronchospasm may be precipitated in patients suffering from or with a previous history of bronchial asthma. Caution should be exercised in these patients. The small amount of alcohol in this medicine will not have any noticeable effects. Some inactive ingredients may cause allergic reactions. Avoid contact with the eyes. **Interactions:** None known. **Pregnancy and lactation:** Difflam™ Sore Throat Rinse should not be used in pregnancy or lactation unless considered essential by the physician. There is no evidence of a teratogenic effect in animal studies. **Undesirable effects:** Serious (frequency not known): Anaphylactic reaction which can be potentially life-threatening. Hypersensitivity reactions. Angioedema (Uncommon). Oral tissue numbness or 'stinging' sensations in the mouth may occur. (Very rare); pruritus, rash, urticaria, photosensitivity reaction, laryngospasm/bronchospasm. Prescribers should consult the Summary of Product Characteristics in relation to side-effects. **Basic price (UK):** RRP Difflam™ Sore Throat Rinse 200ml bottle £8.99 Difflam™ Oral Rinse 300ml bottle £11.19 **Product licence number:** Difflam™ Sore Throat Rinse PL 60682/0014 & Difflam™ Oral Rinse PL 60682/0015 **Legal category:** P. **Marketing Authorisation Holder:** Cooper Consumer Health B.V. Verrijn Stuartweg 60, 1112AX Diemen – The Netherlands. **Date of preparation of Essential information:** August 2025 Ref number: MAT-DIF-00077

The SmPC for this product, including adverse reactions, precautions, contra-indications, and method of use can be found at: Find product information about medicines and from from Cooper Consumer Health B.V., Verrijn Stuartweg 60, 1112 AX Diemen, The Netherlands.

Please continue to report suspected adverse drug reactions with any medicine or vaccine to the MHRA through the Yellow Card Scheme. It is easiest and quickest to report adverse drug reactions online via the Yellow Card Scheme website: Yellow Card | Making medicines and medical devices safer or search for MHRA Yellow Card in the Google Play or Apple App Store. Alternatively, you can report via some clinical IT systems (EMIS/SystemOne/Vision/MiDataBank) or by calling the Commission on Human Medicines (CHM) free phone line: 0800-731-6789. Adverse reactions/events should also be reported to MAH at e-mail address: vigilanceglobal@cooperconsumerhealth.com