

SORE THROAT SUPPORT

RELIEVE THE SYMPTOMS OF SORE THROAT WITH THE DIFFLAM RANGE



Sore throat is very common and is usually a self-limiting condition

that lasts about a week.¹ In most cases it is caused by a virus but in some people, it can be caused by a bacterial infection (strep throat).¹ Most people get better without antibiotics and withholding them rarely leads to complications.² However, sore throat is uncomfortable, and customers are likely to seek fast-acting relief from the pain and a reduction of inflammation, so they can get on with their lives.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: After reading this guide, you will:

Refresh your knowledge about acute sore throat



Understand how benzydamine (Difflam) offers triple action support for sore throat



Recognise which Difflam product is best suited for your customer



SORE THROAT SYMPTOMS: Symptoms of a sore throat include:¹



A painful throat, especially when swallowing



A dry, scratchy throat



Redness in the back of the mouth



Bad breath



A mild cough



Swollen neck glands

The symptoms are similar for children, but they can also get a high temperature and appear less active. Symptoms can last for around one week, but most people will get better within this time without antibiotics, regardless of cause (bacteria or virus).²

The Pharmacy First service is indicated for adults and children aged five years and over (excludes pregnant women under 16 years) suffering with acute sore throat. Antibiotic treatment is only suitable for those suffering with a bacterial infection; however, OTC treatment for symptomatic relief is recommended for all customers.³


pharmacy**first**

ASSESSING YOUR CUSTOMER'S SORE THROAT

It is important to establish the likely cause of your customer's sore throat. Most cases will be viral, but if a bacterial infection is indicated alongside severe symptoms, customers may be offered antibiotics via Pharmacy First.³ One way to assess this is by using the FeverPAIN assessment, awarding one point for each of the following:^{2,3}

- Fever (over 38°C)
- Purulence
- First Attendance within three days after onset of symptoms
- Severely Inflamed tonsils
- No cough or coryza (cold symptoms)

● FeverPAIN score 0 or 1

Antibiotics are not needed and self-care, OTC treatment and adequate fluid consumption is recommended. Customers will be asked to return to the pharmacy for reassessment after one week if no improvement has been seen.

● FeverPAIN score 2 or 3

Antibiotics make little difference to how long symptoms last and withholding them is unlikely to lead to complications. Self-care and OTC treatment are recommended. Customers will be asked to return to the pharmacy for reassessment after three to five days if no improvement has been seen. Thereafter antibiotics may be considered.

● FeverPAIN score 4 or 5

A score of four or five is thought to be associated with a 62 - 65% likelihood of isolating streptococcus.² Therefore, if symptoms are mild, pain relief and self-care alone should be considered first line. However, if symptoms are severe, antibiotics are considered for immediate use. If symptoms do not improve after completion of the treatment course, onward referral to a GP/other appropriate provider will be considered.

Your customer should be offered OTC symptomatic treatment relief and self-care advice as appropriate.

COMPARISON OF COMMON OTC ACTIVE INGREDIENTS FOR SORE THROAT RELIEF

	Benzylamine	Flurbiprofen ^{4,5}	Lidocaine ⁶
Primary effect	Anti-inflammatory, local analgesic and anaesthetic	Anti-inflammatory, analgesic and antipyretic	Anaesthetic
Age suitability	From 4kg body weight (Spray), six years (Lozenges) and 13 years (Rinse)	Over 12 years (Lozenges) or 18 years (Spray)	From 12 years
Contraindications	• Allergy to benzylamine or NSAIDs	• Aspirin/NSAID allergy • Active GI ulcers or history of GI bleeding • Asthma triggered by NSAIDs • Severe heart/kidney/liver disease • Last trimester of pregnancy • Intestinal ulceration, severe colitis or any bleeding disorders associated with NSAID use	• Allergy to amide anaesthetics • Asthma or bronchospasm • Impaired gag reflex (risk of choking)
Drug interactions	None known	<i>Avoid with:</i> • Other NSAIDs and Acetylsalicylic acid (low dose) <i>Caution with:</i> • Anticoagulants, anti-platelets and anti-hypertensive medicines • Diuretics, ACE inhibitors, angiotensin-II-antagonists, cardiac glycosides, ciclosporin, corticosteroids, lithium, methotrexate, mifepristone, oral antidiabetics, phenytoin, probenecid sulfinpyrazone, quinolone antibiotics, SSRIs, tacrolimus and zidovudine • Alcohol	No clinically significant interactions are known



THE DIFFLAM RANGE

The Difflam range of products can be recommended for all sore throats – from mild to severe. The active ingredient in each of these products (benzydamine hydrochloride) offers triple action to ease pain and reduce inflammation.

90%

of pharmacists would recommend Difflam for sore throat⁷

TRIPLE ACTION SUPPORT⁸



- **Analgesic** – to quickly relieve pain and soothe a sore throat effectively
- **Anti-inflammatory** – to reduce inflammation and redness of the sore area
- **Anaesthetic** – to reduce pain by gently numbing the area

ACTIVE INGREDIENT

Difflam contains the active ingredient

benzydamine hydrochloride. It is a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) that is used for local, symptomatic treatment of pain and inflammation (redness, swelling and a feeling of heat) in the throat or mouth.

Typically, NSAIDs work by stopping the formation of prostaglandins, which are natural substances produced by the body when injury or infection occurs.

However, benzydamine hydrochloride has also been recognised for its ability to inhibit the release of pro-inflammatory cytokines without affecting other anti-inflammatory factors, therefore does not present with side effects characteristic of other NSAIDs. Furthermore, unlike other NSAIDs, it exhibits local anaesthetic properties to exert its effects on pain.⁸

With a well-established safety profile,⁹ the ability of benzydamine to concentrate in inflamed tissues, with low systemic exposure, is another advantage that limits potential systemic side effects.⁸

Symptoms usually start to improve a few minutes after using benzydamine hydrochloride and the effects typically last for a few hours.¹⁰

Compared to other medicines used for sore throat OTC, benzydamine offers triple-action effective relief with uncommon or very rare side effects.

There are different formats available to suit your customer's individual preferences and needs. The range includes:

DIFFLAM SPRAY 0.15% W/V OROMUCOSAL SPRAY

Dosage:

Adults and children aged 12 years and over:

Four to eight sprays every 1.5-3 hours

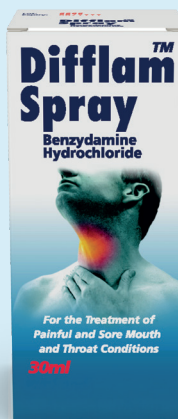
Children aged six years to 11 years:

Four sprays every 1.5-3 hours

Children under six years:

One spray per 4kg of body weight. Maximum four sprays, 1.5-3 hourly.

The spray should be primed before the first use. The spray-tube should be aimed at the sore part of the mouth or throat to release a dose directly at the site of pain and inflammation.



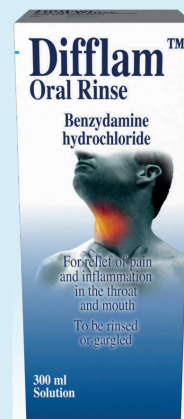
Benzydamine hydrochloride (P)

DIFFLAM ORAL RINSE 0.15% W/V GARGLE

Dosage:

For those aged 13 years and above,

15ml of solution to be used every 1.5-3 hours, using the measuring cup provided to measure the dose. The solution should be rinsed around the mouth or used as a gargle for 20 to 30 seconds and then spat out. This solution should not be swallowed.

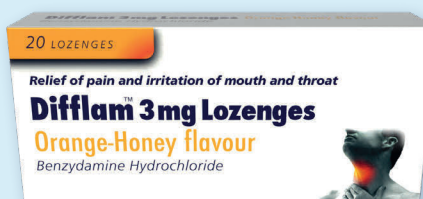


Benzydamine hydrochloride (P)

DIFFLAM 3MG LOZENGES

Dosage:

Adults and children aged six years and older can have one lozenge, three times a day. Allow the lozenge to fully dissolve in the mouth without chewing or swallowing whole.



Benzydamine hydrochloride (P)

WHO CAN USE DIFFLAM?¹⁰

Most adults can use benzydamine hydrochloride. Children can use some types of benzydamine hydrochloride, but it depends on their age:

- **From 4kg to five years old** – spray only
- **Six to 12 years old** – spray or lozenges
- **13 years old and over** – spray, lozenges or rinse

HOW LONG CAN DIFFLAM BE USED FOR?⁹

The spray, lozenges or rinse can be used for up to seven days. If symptoms do not improve after this time, the customer should be referred to as the pharmacist, doctor or dentist as appropriate.

It is very unlikely that serious side effects will occur, however if too much product has been used, and your customer presents with the following symptoms, advise them to contact 111 or emergency services:

- **Nausea and vomiting**
- **Stomach pain**
- **Dizziness**
- **Hallucinations**
- **Feelings of restlessness**
- **Muscle weakness**

The Difflam brand is perceived positively by consumers aware of the brand. More than 75% consider Difflam to be a trusted, easy-to-use brand which eases the pain and inflammation caused by sore throat symptoms and provides quick relief.¹¹

SCAN THE QR CODE FOR PRODUCT INFORMATION AND INFORMATION ON ADVERSE EVENTS REPORTING



SELF-CARE ADVICE



Alongside treatment, you should always offer your customer self-care advice to help relieve/prevent irritation of a sore throat. To help soothe a sore throat and shorten its duration, you can advise your customer to:¹

- Gargle with warm salt water (adults only)
- Drink plenty of water
- Eat cool or soft foods
- Avoid smoking or smoky places
- Suck ice cubes, ice lollies or hard sweets, however younger children should not be offered this due to the risk of choking
- Rest
- Use a tissue and wash hands with soap to help prevent the spread of infection to others.

WHEN TO REFER¹



You should contact 999 or refer your customer or the child to A&E if they:

- Have difficulty breathing or are unable to swallow
- Are drooling – this can be a sign of not being able to swallow
- Are making a high-pitched sound as they breathe (called stridor)
- Have severe symptoms and are getting worse quickly
- Have signs of dehydration, including less frequent urination or dark, strong-smelling urine
- Have a weakened immune system
- Feel a lump in their mouth or neck or have a mouth ulcer that has lasted for more than three weeks.

Now put your knowledge into practice and consider if the following statements are true or false. Answers can be found bottom right.

1. Most acute sore throat cases are caused by a bacterial infection

- ☐ True
☐ False

2. Difflam products can be used for up to seven days

- ☐ True
☐ False

3. Difflam offers triple action support as an analgesic, anaesthetic and anti-inflammatory

- ☐ True
☐ False

4. Benzydamine is less likely to present with side effects characteristic of other NSAIDs

- ☐ True
☐ False

References

1. NHS. Sore throat. 2024. Available at: <https://www.nhs.uk/symptoms/sore-throat/> **2.** NICE guideline. Sore throat (acute): antimicrobial prescribing. 2018. Available at: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng84/resources/sore-throat-acute-antimicrobial-prescribing-pdf-1837694694085> **3.** NHS England. Pharmacy First Clinical Pathways. 2023. Available at: https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/PRN00936_ii_Pharmacy-First-Clinical-Pathways-v.1.6.pdf#page=5 **4.** SmPC. Strefen Eucalyptus and Manuka Honey Flavour 8.75mg Lozenges. 2025. Available at: <https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/product/15831/smpc> **5.** SmPC. Strefen Direct Cherry and Mint Flavour 8.75mg Oromucosal Spray. 2025. Available at: <https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/product/15868/smpc> **6.** SmPC. Boots Severe Sore Throat Relief 2% w/v Oromucosal Spray. 2025. Available at: <https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/product/5538/smpc> **7.** UK Sore throat treatments survey May 2022, CIG Research (Data on file) **8.** Passali D, et al. International Delphi-based consensus on the appropriate use and effect of Benzydamine hydrochloride in the treatment of sore throat. BMC Prim Care. 2022 Nov 23;23(1):296. doi: 10.1186/s12875-022-01901-w. **9.** MHRA. Public Assessment Report. Oroeze/Benzzydamine 0.15% w/v Mouthwash. 2015. Available at: <https://www.e-lactancia.org/media/papers/Benzzydamide-DS-MHRA2015.pdf> **10.** NHS. Benzydamine. 2024. Available at: <https://www.nhs.uk/medicines/benzzydamine/> **11.** UK Difflam Customer Journey Research May 2022, Toluna (Data on file) **Online references last accessed September 2025.**