

Ice cream? Spices? Sore throat hacks that work

Sore throats: they're pesky. They're not just a winter thing (hello, spring allergies). And they can turn serious, such as strep throat.

Do a web search for at-home remedies, and you'll get a lot of results. Which ones work? Which ones might feel good in the moment but don't get the job done? [Isha McConkey, DO](#), a family medicine physician at OSF HealthCare, has your checklist:

- Ice cream: Dr. McConkey doesn't recommend it.

"I know it feels good. But it will increase mucus production in most people. That's going to exacerbate the [throat] irritation," she explains. "We also don't want a lot of sugar," which could lead to cavities.

In fact, Dr. McConkey says this logic applies to dairy foods overall. Skip them come sore throat time.

- Popsicles: These are OK, Dr. McConkey says. Just go for a sugar free or fruit juice-infused option.
- Cough drops: Choose cough drops with xylitol, a sugar alternative, Dr. McConkey says.
- Honey: "It's excellent," Dr. McConkey says. You're still getting sugar, though, so don't guzzle it. Try making a drink with hot water, honey and lemon. Or incorporate honey into your tea.

"You can even add a little cayenne pepper. In some types of sore throats, it may make it worse. But most people find it can be very soothing. It has some numbing properties," Dr. McConkey adds. But don't take that as a license to eat spicy food. The acidity in tacos, for example, might cause throat irritation.

- Soups: Pop that chicken noodle soup in the microwave, Dr. McConkey says. She says research has found that some soups have antibacterial properties that can help with any illness. Opt for a low sodium can.
- Salt water: You've probably seen online videos or heard the tactic passed down by family members. Yes, it can help, Dr. McConkey says. Gargling salt water can decrease swelling, she says. Try it before you drink your tea or before you go to bed to help get a restful night.