

Emergency Medicine Reports

The Practical Journal for Emergency Physicians

"Killer" Sore Throat

Conditions Presenting with Sore Throat and Inability to Swallow Saliva

- Epiglottitis
- Peritonsillar abscess
- Retropharyngeal abscess
- Ludwig's angina
- Abscesses in the deep neck space
- Allergic drug reactions
- Lingual tonsillitis
- Ingested foreign body with or without perforation
- Pharyngeal zoster
- Botulism
- Tetanus
- Stevens-Johnson syndrome
- Toxic epidermal necrolysis
- Inhalation or aspiration of toxic chemicals
- Tumors or trauma to the larynx
- Diphtheria

Clinical Findings of Peritonsillar Abscess

- Severe pain
- Fever
- Dysphagia
- Trismus
- Hoarse, "hot potato" voice
- Enlargement of the tonsil
- Uvula deviated to the unaffected side
- Deviation of tonsil toward midline with rotation of anterior tonsillar pillar
- Fluctuance of the soft tissue between the upper pole of the tonsil and the soft palate

Predisposing Factors for Retropharyngeal Abscess

- Penetrating trauma: Foreign body such as pencil, Popsicle stick, or fishbone
- Tonsillitis
- Pharyngitis
- Peritonsillar abscess
- Croup
- Otitis media
- Nasal infections
- Dental infections
- Intubation
- Adenoidectomy (recent)

Complications of Retropharyngeal Abscess

- Rupture of abscess
- Airway rupture
- Asphyxiation
- Aspiration pneumonia
- Spinal rupture
- Lateral pharyngeal space rupture
- Inferior rupture into mediastinum
- Airway compromise

Scoring System* for Croup⁷⁵

LEVEL OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Normal or sleeping	0
Disoriented	5

CYANOSIS

None	0
With agitation	4
At rest	5

STRIDOR

None	0
With agitation	1
At rest	2

AIR ENTRY

Normal	0
Decreased	1
Markedly decreased	2

RETRACTIONS

None	0
Mild	1
Moderate	2
Severe	3

* Zero represents the normal state or absence of the sign and the highest number represents the most severe distress.

Clinical Findings of Epiglottitis in the Adult^{99,100,107,111}

- Gradual onset of symptoms
- Rapid progression
- Severe sore throat (95-100%)
- Dysphagia (76%)
- Pain on swallowing (95%)
- Pain on palpation of the larynx
- High fever (88%)
- Muffled voice (50%)
- Shortness of breath or respiratory difficulty
- Drooling (relatively uncommon)
- "Upright" positioning
- Ear pain
- Toxic appearance

Clinical Findings of Epiglottitis in the Child^{111,112}

- Sudden onset of symptoms
- Rapid progression
- High fever
- Muffled, "hot potato" voice
- Inspiratory stridor
- Sore throat
- Dysphagia
- Drooling
- "Tripod" positioning
- Toxic appearance