

Understanding acute throat syndrome by cold exposure with Homoeopathic approach

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Abstract—Acute throat syndrome is an inflammatory condition of the pharyngeal mucosa characterized by the formation of lymphoid follicles or exudative patches on the posterior pharyngeal wall. Acute throat syndrome from cold exposure happens because cold, dry air irritates throat tissues, reduces protective moisture, and weakens immunity, making it prone to viral infections like the common cold or flu, leading to dryness, scratchiness, pain, and hoarseness, especially with mouth breathing or sudden temperature changes, often seen in winter. Symptoms include soreness, difficulty swallowing, and cough, managed with hydration, humidifiers, and nose breathing; however, persistent symptoms warrant medical attention. It commonly presents with sore throat, difficulty in swallowing, and visible granules or follicles. While modern medicine relies on antibiotics and symptomatic relief, homoeopathy offers individualized treatment targeting not only the local pathology but also the systemic susceptibility. This article explores the nature of the disease and its management through key homoeopathic principles and remedies.

Index Terms—Homoeopathy, Acute throat syndrome, Sore throat, Synthesis repertory, Homoeopathic medicines

I. Introduction

Cold exposure can cause acute throat syndrome by drying out throat membranes, irritating them, and making them vulnerable to viruses, leading to symptoms like soreness, scratchiness, hoarseness, and cough, often without infection initially but increasing infection risk due to reduced humidity (indoors and out) and potential immune system dips. Breathing through the mouth in cold air exacerbates this dryness, making sore throats common during winter or after sudden temperature changes, with symptoms resolving as the throat rehydrates¹.

II. Etiology

Infectious agents

- Bacterial: Group A β -hemolytic Streptococcus (less commonly in follicular type).
- Viral: Rhinovirus, Adenovirus, Influenza.

III. How Cold Exposure Leads to Throat Issues

Dryness & Irritation: Throat's delicate mucous membranes require adequate moisture to function optimally. Winter creates a dual challenge: outdoor cold air contains minimal moisture, while indoor heating systems aggressively dry the air further. Research shows indoor heating systems reduce humidity to 20-30%, far below the healthy 40-50% range. This excessive dryness irritates throat tissues, causing scratchiness, discomfort, and inflammation. Without protective mucous barriers functioning properly, bacteria and viruses gain easier access to throat tissues. The drying effect becomes particularly pronounced

at night sleep in heated bedrooms with closed windows, explaining why many people wake with sore throats during winter.²

Thickened Mucus: Dehydration thickens mucus, reducing its protective barrier.

Increased Infection Risk: Winter represents the peak season for respiratory viruses including rhinovirus, influenza, and coronavirus. According to a 2023 Respiratory Health Survey, throat pain and upper respiratory infections increase by 22-28% during winter months compared to other seasons. This seasonal surge occurs through multiple mechanisms: viruses survive longer in cold temperatures, people congregate indoors in poorly ventilated spaces, and reduced sunlight exposure decreases vitamin D production, weakening immune function. Each virus particle that enters your throat triggers inflammation and mucus production, creating the painful sensations characteristic of winter throat infection. Cold and flu viruses spread through airborne droplets when infected individuals cough or sneeze. Crowded indoor environments, public transportation, offices, classrooms, facilitate rapid transmission throughout winter. Dry, irritated tissues allow viruses and bacteria to enter more easily, while low humidity and indoor heating worsen this².

Immune System Impact: Immune system's effectiveness fluctuates with seasons. Cold temperatures trigger physiological responses that can temporarily suppress immune function. Simultaneously, reduced winter sunlight exposure decreases vitamin D production. Vitamin D plays crucial roles in immune regulation, and deficiency correlates with increased respiratory infection susceptibility. This seasonal immunity dip creates conditions where throat infections develop more easily and persist longer than similar infections during warmer months.³

Exposure to Allergens Indoors During Winter: Winter forces us indoors for extended periods, increasing exposure to indoor allergens including dust mites, pet dander, mold spores, and cleaning product irritants. Research shows indoor allergen concentrations increase 35-40% during winter as homes remain sealed against cold outdoor air. These allergens trigger inflammatory responses in throat tissues, causing swelling, itching, and pain. Winter allergies causing throat pain often accompany nasal congestion, postnasal drip, and cough, creating compound throat irritation from multiple sources simultaneously.⁴

Sudden Shifts: Rapid transitions from cold to warm indoor air further irritate sensitive throat tissues.

Throat Infection Triggers: Summer vs. Winter Comparison:

Trigger Factor	Summer Incidence %	Winter Incidence%	Key Difference
Viral Infections	17-20	52-44	3 times higher in winter
Dry Air Effect	10-12	58-60	6 times higher in winter
Seasonal Allergies	20-22	30-33	Shift from pollen to indoor allergens
Temperature Stress	08-10	38-40	Cold exposure weakens immunity
Indoor Crowding	15-17	52-55	More time indoors during winter
Humidity Levels	50-60	20-30	Significantly drier in winter

IV. Common Symptoms

Mild throat irritation is normal during winter, but certain symptoms need medical attention.

- Persistent throat pain/scratchiness lasting beyond 7-10 days without any improvement.
- Difficulty swallowing that interferes with eating or drinking, talking.
- Hoarseness or voice changes lasting more than two weeks.
- Dry throat.
- High fever (above 101°F/38.3°C) accompanying throat pain (can indicate infection).
- Enlarged, tender lymph nodes in the neck.⁵

V. Prevention & Relief

- Stay well-hydrated by consuming 8-10 glasses of water daily plus warm fluids like herbal teas with honey and lemon. Adequate hydration keeps throat tissues moist and supports immune function.
- Breathe Through Nose: Inhale through your nose, not your mouth, to warm and humidify air before it reaches your throat.
- Maintain adequate humidity using humidifiers maintaining 40-50% indoor moisture. This single intervention dramatically reduces throat irritation and infection risk.
- Use protective measures outdoors by wearing scarves over your mouth and nose when exposed to cold air. This warms incoming air before it reaches your throat.
- Avoid Extremes: Stay away from very cold drinks and foods to prevent swelling.
- Practice hand hygiene by washing hands frequently with soap for at least 20 seconds, particularly before touching your face. This prevents viral transmission that causes winter throat infection.
- Optimize sleep quality by maintaining 7-9 hours nightly in cool, well-humidified bedrooms. Quality sleep strengthens immune function and supports faster recovery if infection develops.
- Boost immunity naturally through balanced nutrition emphasizing fruits rich in vitamin C, warm soups, and foods containing zinc. Consider vitamin D supplementation after consulting healthcare providers.
- Warm Up Gradually: Avoid sudden temperature changes.⁵

VI. Homoeopathic Perspective

In homoeopathy, acute follicular pharyngitis is viewed as a local manifestation of a systemic disturbance. The acute episode is often the surface expression of underlying miasmatic tendencies (primarily psoric or sycotic). The choice of remedy is based on:

- Location, sensation, modalities, and concomitants.
- Mental and physical generals.
- Past history of similar episodes.
- Family history and miasmatic background.

VII. Selected Homoeopathic Remedies with indications

1. Belladonna

- Sudden onset with high-grade fever.
- Red, inflamed pharynx with dryness.
- Burning, constrictive sensation in throat.
- Worse on swallowing, from slightest touch.

- Throbbing carotids, flushed face.^{6,7}

2. Ferrum phosphoricum

- First stage of inflammation.
- Mild, gradual onset.
- Red throat with moderate pain.
- Useful when Belladonna picture is not fully developed.⁶

3. Hepar sulphuris calcareum

- Sharp, splinter-like pain in throat.
- Pain radiates to ears while swallowing.
- Worse from cold air or drinks; better from warmth.
- Sensitivity to touch and drafts.⁷

4. Mercurius solubilis

- Ulcerated follicles, offensive breath.
- Profuse salivation, swollen glands.
- Worse at night, from both heat and cold.
- Tongue flabby with imprints.⁷

5. Phytolacca decandra

- Dark red or bluish pharynx with follicular swelling.
- Pain radiating to ears on swallowing.
- Throat feels sore and bruised.
- Worse from hot drinks; better with cold fluids.⁸

6. Kali muriaticum

- Chronic follicular pharyngitis.
- Whitish follicles and thick, white mucus in throat.
- Lack of acute inflammation, more catarrhal.
- Indicated in slow, lingering cases.⁹

7. Lachesis mutus

- Left-sided throat pain or spreading from left to right.
- Cannot bear anything tight around neck.
- Swallowing liquids more painful than solids.⁹

Repertorial Approach (Synthesis Repertory)

- Throat – Inflammation – Pharynx – Follicular: Bell., Hep., Phyt., Merc.
- Throat – Pain – Swallowing – liquids agg.: Lach., Bell.
- Throat – Sensation – Splinter, as from: Hep., Arg-n.
- Generalities – Cold – air – aggravates: Hepar, Kali-m., Merc.

Management and Prevention

- Advise warm fluids, rest, and avoidance of irritants.
- Gargling with warm saline water may help symptomatically.
- Address recurrent tendency with constitutional treatment post-acute phase.
- Consider miasmatic remedy if recurrences are frequent (e.g., Sulphur, Thuja, Tuberculinum).

Dose and Potency

- In acute cases: 0/1 , repeated dose depending on severity and response.
- In recurrent cases: 0/1 to 0/7 used based on constitutional similarity.
- Remedy should be ceased upon noticeable improvement; resume if relapse occurs.

VIII. Conclusion

Acute throat syndrome can cause significant discomfort and distress. Homoeopathy provides an individualized and holistic approach to its treatment, aiming not just at symptom relief but at preventing recurrence through constitutional care. Accurate remedy selection based on totality and acute phase presentation is key to effective resolution.

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