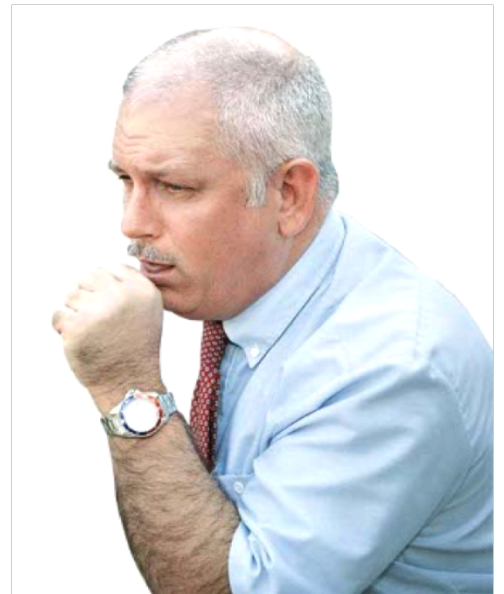


# Bronchitis

Bronchitis just means irritation of the airways (bronchi). This could be caused by an allergy or an infection, and the infection could be any of a whole variety of microbes, viral, fungal or bacterial. Most episodes of bronchitis are viral and are rather mild, resolving on their own.

The most frequent origin of bronchitis is a common cold caused by a virus. Beginning in the upper airway (nose & throat), it finds its way to the lungs after a few days. Then a cough develops which changes daily (tight to loose). In hearty individuals the cough goes away within another 4-5 days. If the mucus doesn't get out of the lungs the lungs may get infected with bacteria. Antibiotics then can treat bacteria. If left untreated this can sometimes progress to pneumonia.



If you receive antibiotics and you do not improve much, it is fairly good proof that you only have a virus, hence you don't need the antibacterial antibiotics. Since smokers have less effective removal of their secretions and diminished functioning of white blood cells in the lung, they typically need antibiotics sooner than others. Asthmatics are more likely to have mucus trapped in their lungs that is very attractive to bacteria. They too are likely to need antibiotics along with intensified asthma medications. Individuals with weak immune systems may need antibiotics sooner. And a study in children recently showed amoxicillin helped them recover more quickly, despite the common belief that it was "only a virus" that they were suffering from.

There are things you can do to get better! Remember, secretions need to get out of your lung. To help accomplish that you may steam the secretions so they can come up easier. This is especially true if your cough is constantly annoying but doesn't bring anything up. Put your face over a sink full of steamy hot water for 5 minutes, breathing in the steam with a towel over your head (like a facial). Then, when you feel some secretions being loosened up, take a very deep breath and make a cough that starts way down low to bring those secretions out. Secretions can be spat out or swallowed: stomach acid kills bacteria you swallow.

When the cough is bringing up nothing (even after the above steam treatment) you may need to suppress the cough. First try an ancient acupressure point just below your nose and above the upper lip: press hard there when the urge to cough comes and suppress it. If that doesn't work cough medicines may come to the rescue.

Over-the-counter cough medicines like Robitussin DM or Vicks Cough and Cold can work quite well. Most of the medicines have some alcohol in them, and a not-so-ancient cough medicine is simply hot whiskey (make sure you are of age!). Better yet is a hot Toddy with 1.5 ounces apple cider, ½ of a lemon's juice, 1 tablespoon of honey and ½ tsp cinnamon ...heat up in microwave then add one ounce of whiskey.

Get adequate rest while you are sick and eat well. Reduce your workload and take a nap. Call us if you notice: rapid heart rate, rapid breathing, lethargy, wheezing, air hunger, high fever, loss of weight or reduced urine production. Best of all, think about getting the flu shot next year as it seems to protect the lung from some episodes of bronchitis. And if you are over 60 please ask about getting a pneumococcal vaccine.

Of course anyone smoking can use this illness as an opportunity to throw out all your cigarettes!

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