

BRONCHITIS (CHEST COLD)

WHAT IS BRONCHITIS?

Bronchitis is a cold in your chest. It's an irritation of the airways in your lungs and is usually caused by a viral infection. Symptoms may include a cough with mucous production, chest discomfort, fever, and fatigue.

A chest cold may last from days to weeks, depending on your general state of health and the cause of the infection. Sometimes a chest cold is accompanied by a dry, hacking cough that may last from 4 to 8 weeks or longer.



Bronchitis (chest cold) is usually caused by a viral infection, like other colds and the flu. Antibiotics do not work on viral infections.



CALL YOUR DOCTOR IF YOU:

- Have a fever over 100° F (38.3° C) with chills, particularly lasting more than 24 hours
- Cough up blood
- Have trouble breathing
- Notice your feet are swelling
- Are not feeling better within 10-14 days from when symptoms start
- Have any other symptoms that concern you

WILL ANTIBIOTICS HELP?

No. Antibiotics work only on infections caused by bacteria.

Since most chest colds are caused by viral infections, antibiotics do not help. Not only are they ineffective, but unnecessary use of antibiotics can cause bacteria to become resistant to them. (Contrary to popular belief, colored mucus is common with chest colds and does NOT mean that you have a bacterial infection.)

Some people, especially smokers, have a chronic (persistent, ongoing) productive cough. If your chronic productive cough gets worse—you experience increased coughing, increased shortness of breath, or a change in the color of your mucus—call your doctor.

CAN ANY OTHER TREATMENTS HELP?

Your doctor may prescribe asthma or cough medicines to help with wheezing, coughing, and congestion. Also, if you are over 65 years of age, or if you have a chronic illness (like diabetes or asthma), your doctor will most likely recommend flu and pneumonia vaccinations for you as well.

WHAT ELSE MIGHT HELP?

The best thing you can do to help relieve your symptoms is to take care of yourself. This means doing the following:

- Don't smoke. If you can't quit, at least cut down on the number of cigarettes you smoke.
- Avoid second-hand smoke and other irritants such as dust or chemicals.
- Take ibuprofen or acetaminophen to reduce fever and relieve headache and muscle pain.
- Use a vaporizer, humidifier, or steam from hot water to add moisture to the air.
- Drink fluids (at least eight 8-ounce glasses a day).
- Get plenty of rest.
- Eat nutritious, balanced meals.



PREVENTING CHEST COLDS

- Wash your hands often to get rid of viruses
- Don't smoke
- Get plenty of rest



*Taking care of yourself is
the best prevention
and therapy for viral
chest colds.*



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