**DIAGNOSIS**

**Acute Cough Symptoms**

- **Possible pneumonia?**
  - Yes: Chest x-ray
  - (+): Pneumonia CPM
  - (-): Possible asthma?
    - Yes: Asthma CPM
    - No: Possible rhinosinusitis?
      - Yes: Antibiotics ONLY if severe or persistent symptoms
      - No: Possible influenza?
        - Check Germ Watch
          - Yes: Possible pertussis?
            - Yes: Test & treat ONLY if sx with known exposure or local outbreak
            - No: Possible exacerbation of chronic bronchitis?
              - Yes: COPD CPM
              - No: Treat acute bronchitis (chest cold)
        - No: Possible exacerbation of chronic bronchitis?
          - Yes: COPD CPM
          - No: Treat acute bronchitis (chest cold)

- No: Possible asthma?
  - Yes: Asthma CPM
  - No: Possible rhinosinusitis?
    - Yes: Antibiotics ONLY if severe or persistent symptoms
    - No: Possible exacerbation of chronic bronchitis?
      - Yes: COPD CPM
      - No: Treat acute bronchitis (chest cold)

Not intended to replace physician judgment with respect to individual variations and needs.
**TREATMENT**

**Acute Bronchitis (Chest Cold)**

**MANAGE with NO antibiotics**

- **Withhold antibiotics.** NO antibiotics.
- **Provide education:**
  - Refer to illness as a “chest cold” (not bronchitis).
  - Explain antibiotic risks (see *Colds and Coughs in Adults: Managing Viral Infections* fact sheet).
  - Offer contingency plan if cough worsens.
- **Recommend symptom relief:**
  - Fever, aches, pains: NSAIDs, acetaminophen.
  - Nasal congestion: decongestant may help.
  - Cough: ipratropium (Atrovent), tiotropium (Spiriva), guaifenesin (Mucinex, Robitussin) may help; albuterol (Proventil) if wheezing or asthma. Other remedies not proven effective.

**FOLLOW UP**

- Follow-up appt. for new/worsening symptoms, or if cough lasts longer than 3 weeks total.
- Re-evaluate; consider chest x-ray.
- If cough lasts 3 to 8 weeks, CXR is normal, and pertussis ruled out, consider diagnosis of post-infectious cough. Avoid antibiotics; consider ipratropium (or if ineffective, inhaled corticosteroids).