

UAB Health Education

STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES

BRONCHITIS



Bronchitis is an inflammation of the bronchi (the air passages extending from the windpipe to the lungs), which is generally caused by a virus and often occurs after an upper respiratory infection. These passages become irritated, swell and produce mucus. This causes a cough that can produce sputum, often lasting 2-3 weeks. After the mucus clears you may still have a dry, nagging cough for up to 4 weeks, sometimes longer.

DIAGNOSIS

Based on symptoms and physical exam. Your doctor may order a chest X-ray to rule out pneumonia.

TREATMENT

- Rest, decrease physical activity, avoid over-exertion
- Increase fluid intake
- Steam treatments, use humidifier/vaporizer, if possible
- Avoid smoking and second-hand smoke

Because most cases of bronchitis are caused by viruses, antibiotics are not used. Over-the-counter medications will not shorten the course of illness, but may relieve symptoms:

PAIN, HEADACHE, FEVER	Ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) Acetaminophen (Tylenol)
COUGH	Honey Mucus-thinners - Guaifenesin (Mucinex, Robitussin) Decongestants (Sudafed) Cough Suppressant - Dextromethorphan (Delsym, Robitussin) <i>Do not use cough suppressants for a wet cough - bringing up mucus helps clear your bronchial tubes</i>
SORE THROAT	Cough drops/throat lozenges

CALL STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES IF:

- Temperature >100.4°F persists >3-4 days
- Cough with bloody mucus
- Chest pain, shortness of breath, trouble breathing
- Symptoms lasting more than 3 weeks without improvement or repeated episodes of bronchitis

RESOURCES

FamilyDoctor.org <https://familydoctor.org/condition/acute-bronchitis/>

Mayo Clinic <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/bronchitis/symptoms-causes/syc-20355566>

CDC <https://www.cdc.gov/antibiotic-use/community/for-patients/common-illnesses/bronchitis.html>

SYMPTOMS

- Deep cough producing yellow/green mucus
- Pain behind the breastbone with deep breaths or coughing
- Wheezing or shortness of breath
- Low-grade fever/chills
- Fatigue, headache, sore muscles

RISK FACTORS

- Upper respiratory infection
- Cigarette smoke
- Exposure to irritants such as smoke, dust or fumes
- Gastric reflux or heartburn
- Asthma

PREVENTION

- Eat healthy foods, exercise, get adequate sleep
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Wash hands frequently with soap, avoid touching eyes/mouth, cough/sneeze into your elbow
- Clean common surfaces such as counters and doorknobs with antibacterial disinfectant
- Avoid cigarette smoke and polluted air
- Use a humidifier to moisten the air
- Get a flu shot every year