



Acute Bronchitis

Bronchitis

Surprising Fact:

Many people believe that bronchitis must be treated with antibiotics. Yet almost all cases of bronchitis are caused by viruses. Antibiotics do not work against viruses.

What to do:

- Bronchitis will usually go away on its own, though the cough may last several days or weeks.
- Rest and drink plenty of water.
- Do not smoke.
- Avoid dust or fumes that damage or irritate your lungs.
- Use a humidifier or breathe moist air as in a hot shower.
- Get chest and back massages.

Call Your Doctor If:

- You continue to wheeze or cough for more than 1 month, especially at night or when you are active.
- You cough and feel very sick, weak and have a high fever that does not go down.
- You cough up blood.
- You have trouble breathing when you lie down.



Developed by the Washington State Department of Health, Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department and Washington AWARE

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, American Academy of Family Physicians and Healthwise.

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Bronchitis is an infection of the small tubes and the lining of the lungs. The infection causes damage and swelling. Your body fights the virus and mucus forms in your lungs. This makes it hard to breathe. You cough up mucus and may have a wheeze or whistling sound when you breathe.

Viruses cause bronchitis. The same kinds of viruses that cause colds also cause most bronchitis. After your body fights off the virus, it takes a while for your lungs to heal. So you may have a cough for more than a week or two. You are more likely to get bronchitis if you smoke or are around factory dust and fumes, because your lungs are already weakened. If you smoke, it takes longer for your lungs to heal. Very rarely, bronchitis can be caused in other ways, such as by stomach acid getting into the lungs or by bacteria.

Antibiotics will not help most cases of bronchitis. There is no test to prove you have bronchitis. Almost all cases of bronchitis are caused by viruses. Antibiotics will not help because they do not kill viruses. Even when the mucus you cough up is thick and yellow, antibiotics will not help you get better any faster. Taking antibiotics when they are not needed may harm you by creating stronger germs. Most cases of bronchitis will get better on their own.

Bronchitis may be confused with allergies, asthma or pneumonia. Talk with your health care provider if you have other symptoms, such as a high fever, feeling weak, trouble breathing when you lie down, and wheezing at night or when you are active.

The best ways to prevent bronchitis are to wash your hands and to stop smoking. Viruses are spread when you touch your hands to your mouth, nose and eyes. Washing your hands often with plain soap and warm water will help keep viruses from entering your body. You are less likely to get bronchitis in the future if you stop smoking. Also, avoid breathing dust, smoke and fumes that can damage your lungs.



Acute sinusitis

Sinus Infection

Surprising Fact:

Most people who see a doctor for sinus symptoms do not have a sinus infection. Thick yellow or green mucus is normal as your body fights a virus and does not mean you need an antibiotic.

What to do:

- Drink more water. Sip hot liquids.
- Use a humidifier and breathe moist air as in a hot shower.
- Gently squirt salt water into the nose with a bulb syringe.
- Take acetaminophen or ibuprofen to relieve pain. Follow the instruction on the label for correct doses.
- Put moist hot towels on the face
- Try a decongestant for 2-3 days

Call Your Doctor If:

- You have sinus pain when you lean forward.
- You have sinus pain and a fever.
- A cold lasts longer than 2 weeks and gets worse even when you have used decongestants and other home remedies.

A sinus infection involves a build up of mucus in the sinuses.

There are several small chambers in the bone behind your cheeks and eyebrows, called sinus passages. Most sinus infections start after a cold. Your body fights the cold virus by making mucus which helps wash the virus out of your nose and sinuses. The lining of the sinuses swells and the mucus is partly blocked. This is called sinusitis.

There are different kinds of sinusitis. Cold viruses are the most common cause. Smoking, allergies, using nasal sprays too much, swimming, even changes in air pressure, can lead to sinusitis. When mucus is blocked in a sinus passage, sometimes bacteria grow. Bacterial infections can cause sinus pressure, pain around the eyes when you lean forward, and fever. This is called acute bacterial sinusitis. A cold that starts to get better then gets worse may be a sign of acute bacterial sinusitis. Your health care provider may treat this kind of infection with an antibiotic. Antibiotics are used to kill bacteria.

Antibiotics do not work on all sinus problems. Many cases of sinusitis will get better on their own by using home remedies. Antibiotics do not kill viruses, so they will not make a cold go away any faster. Antibiotics often do not help people who have ongoing and chronic sinusitis. Talk with your health care provider about whether or not you need an antibiotic. Taking antibiotics when they are not needed may harm you by creating stronger germs. It is best to take antibiotics only when needed. If your provider gives you an antibiotic, always finish the entire prescription--- the last few pills kill the toughest germs.

The best ways to prevent infections are to wash your hands and to stop smoking. Viruses are spread when you touch your hands to your mouth, nose and eyes. Washing your hands often with plain soap and warm water will help keep viruses from entering your body. When blowing your nose, blow gently. If you stop smoking you can prevent many lung, nose, ear and sinus problems. People who smoke are much more likely to get colds and sinusitis.



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Otitis media

Ear Infections

Surprising Fact:

As many as 80% of ear infections will clear up on their own. Resistance to antibiotics occurs most often in children who take antibiotics for ear infections.

What to do:

- Press a warm wash cloth or heating pad set on low against the sore ear.
- Rest and let your body fight the infection.
- Drink more water.
- Take acetaminophen or ibuprofen to relieve pain. Read the label for a child's dose.
- Decongestants may help. Avoid antihistamines.

Call Your Doctor If:

- You have an earache that lasts longer than 12 hours, or if the pain is severe.
- You suspect an ear infection in an infant or young child.
- Your infant or toddler rubs or pulls on an ear and appears to be in pain.
- Your child also has a fever.

Ear infections usually involve a build up of fluid in the middle ear.

Most ear infections start after a cold. Your body fights the cold virus. The tube between the ear and the throat may swell and close up. Then the fluid builds up in the ear. Pressure also builds up and causes pain. The fluid in the ear can last for several weeks.

There are different kinds of ear infections. Cold viruses are the most common cause of ear infections. Allergies and second-hand smoke can also lead to infections. Bacteria can grow in the fluid trapped in the ear. Bacterial infections can cause pain, fever, dizziness and ringing in the ears. In some cases the pressure can damage the eardrum. Your health care provider may treat this kind of infection with an antibiotic. Antibiotics are used to kill bacteria.

Young children get more ear infections because they get more colds. Also, the tube between the ear and throat is smaller and more easily blocked. Many children have fluid in the middle ear for as long as two months after a cold. They do not always need antibiotics.

Most ear infections will clear up on their own. Talk with your health care provider about whether or not you need an antibiotic. Taking antibiotics when they are not needed may harm you by creating stronger germs. Antibiotics do not kill viruses, so they will not make a cold go away any faster. It is best to take antibiotics only when needed. If your provider gives you antibiotics, always finish the entire prescription—the last few pills kill the toughest germs.

The best way to prevent infections is to wash your hands. Viruses are spread when you touch your hands to your mouth, nose and eyes. Washing your hands often with plain soap and warm water will help keep viruses from entering your body. Breastfeed infants in an upright position and never put them to bed with a bottle, because the liquid can get into the ear. When blowing your nose, blow gently. Avoid tobacco smoke or stop smoking.



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Rhinopharyngitis

Runny Nose

Surprising Fact:

Colds can last longer than 2 weeks. Thick yellow or green mucus is normal as your body fights the virus. It does not mean you need an antibiotic.

What to do:

- Drink more water. Herbal teas and chicken soup are good, too.
- Take acetaminophen or ibuprofen to relieve aches. Read the label for a child's dose.
- Use a humidifier and take hot showers to relieve stuffiness.
- Use a decongestant to help thin the mucus. Antihistamines are best for allergies.
- If your nose is red and raw, dab on some petroleum jelly or salve, or use tissues with lotion.

Call Your Doctor If:

- You have a high fever (101° or higher).
- You have a fever over 100° for more than two or three days.
- You have a hard time breathing.

A runny nose is a normal part of a cold. When cold viruses infect your nose and throat, your body produces clear mucus. Your body is fighting the virus. Mucus helps wash viruses out of your nose. After two or three days, immune cells that attack the viruses start changing the mucus to a white or yellow color. Bacteria that normally live in your nose also get mixed in with the mucus and can change it to a greenish color.

Colds almost always clear up on their own. There are at least 200 different viruses that can cause a cold. Common symptoms are a runny nose, sneezing, sore throat, dry cough, headache and sore muscles. The average child has six colds a year. Adults have fewer. These viral infections can last a few days or as long as a few weeks. It is important to take care of yourself and get plenty of rest, because a cold can weaken your body. This can lead to other conditions like ear infections, bronchitis, and even bacterial infections.

Antibiotics do not work against viral infections. Antibiotics do not kill viruses, so they will not make a cold or runny nose go away any faster. Taking antibiotics when they are not needed may harm you or your child by creating stronger germs. Over-the-counter medicines can help relieve the symptoms of a cold, such as runny nose. Talk with your health care provider about medicines that can help you feel better.

The best way to prevent viral infections is to wash your hands.

Viruses are spread when you touch your hands to your mouth, nose and eyes. Washing your hands often with plain soap and warm water will help keep viruses from entering your body. Eat well, get plenty of sleep and exercise to keep your body strong and prevent colds. People who smoke are more likely to get colds, stay sick longer and have other problems, such as bronchitis. Children who are around tobacco smoke are more likely to get colds and have more serious problems, such as asthma.



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Pharyngitis

Sore Throat

Surprising Fact:

Not all sore throats are strep throat. You need a test to tell for sure. You only need antibiotics if your test shows you have strep throat.

What to do:

- Drink more water. Honey and lemon in hot water or herbal teas are good, too.
- Gargle with warm salt water.
- Take acetaminophen or ibuprofen to relieve pain. Read the label for a child's dose.

Call Your Doctor If:

- You have a hard time swallowing or breathing
- You get a sore throat after being around someone with strep throat
- You also have a fever over 101° or rash with a sore throat.
- You cannot trace the cause to a cold, allergy, smoking yelling or other irritation.

Viruses cause most sore throats. When viruses infect your nose, throat and sinuses, your body fights back by making mucus. This helps wash out viruses. The mucus from your nose and sinuses drains into your throat. It can make your throat feel sore. Allergies, smoking, and air pollution can also lead to a sore throat. Some sore throats happen when stomach acid comes up into the throat. Yelling or speaking for a long time can also make the throat sore.

Antibiotics do not work against viral infections. A sore throat from a virus will get better on its own within a week or two. Antibiotics will not make a sore throat go away any faster if it is caused by a virus. Taking antibiotics when they are not needed may harm you by creating stronger germs.

Talk with your health care provider about medicines that can help you feel better. For sore throats caused by allergies, your provider can help you figure out how to avoid the things that trigger your allergies.

Some sore throats, such as strep throat, are caused by bacteria.

Only about 15% of sore throats are caused by strep. Your health care provider can do a test to see if you have strep throat. Signs of strep throat include throat pain, fever, swollen glands and white patches in the throat. It is contagious and more common in children ages 4 to 11. Strep throat is a serious infection that usually needs to be treated with antibiotics. If your test shows you have strep, your provider may give you antibiotics. Always finish the entire prescription—the last few pills kill the toughest germs.

The best way to prevent infections is to wash your hands. Germs are spread when you touch your hands to your mouth, nose and eyes. Washing your hands often with plain soap and warm water will help keep germs from entering your body. To prevent sore throats do not smoke, and avoid things that cause allergies, such as dust, pollen and fumes. Drink lots of water, and get plenty of rest.



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