

Symptoms of Cough / Acute Bronchitis

Symptoms of a cough / acute bronchitis may include:

- ▶ Cough which develops over a day or so and may become quite irritating.
- ▶ Fever, headache, aches and pains.
- ▶ Cold symptoms.

Symptoms typically peak after 2-3 days, and then gradually clear. However, the cough may persist for up to three weeks after the infection has gone. This is because the inflammation in the airways, caused by the infection, can take a while to clear.

Do I need an antibiotic?

Most coughs / acute bronchitis are caused by a viral infection.

Antibiotics **DO NOT** kill viruses.

So you **DO NOT** need an antibiotic for most coughs / acute bronchitis.

In people who are normally well, your own immune system will usually clear the infection. Most bouts of cough / acute bronchitis clear without complications.

Antibiotics may cause side-effects such as thrush, diarrhoea, rash and stomach upsets, so they should not be taken unnecessarily. Unnecessary use of some antibiotics has caused them to become less effective.

You may be prescribed antibiotics if you already have ongoing chronic lung disease. This is to prevent you developing a 'secondary' bacterial infection, rather than to clear a viral infection.

Treatment for Cough / Acute Bronchitis

Treatment options to relieve symptoms whilst waiting for your immune system to clear the infection.

No treatment	Many bouts of cough / acute bronchitis are mild and will usually get better soon without any treatment.
Pain & fever relief	Take paracetamol or ibuprofen regularly. Do not take any more than the recommended dose.
Fluids	Drink plenty of fluids such as water and fruit-juices to avoid dehydration.
Over-the-counter medicines	Ask your community pharmacist for advice.
Quit smoking	Cough and serious lung diseases are more common in smokers.

What symptoms should I look out for?

Contact a doctor if any of the following occur:

- ▶ Symptoms such as fever, chest pains, or headaches become worse or severe.
- ▶ Fast breathing, wheezing or shortness of breath.
- ▶ Coughing up blood. Dark or rusty coloured sputum may indicate blood.
- ▶ You become drowsy or confused.
- ▶ You develop any symptoms which you are unhappy about, or do not understand.
- ▶ Cough persists for longer than 3-4 weeks.
- ▶ If you have recurring bouts of acute bronchitis.