

Treatment for bronchitis

Acute bronchitis is an infection of the lining of the air tubes of the lungs. It is normally caused by a virus and can often happen after a cold or flu. Smoking increases your chances of getting the infection.

What are the symptoms of bronchitis?

The symptoms include;

- Persistent chesty cough
- Breathlessness on exertion
- Coughing up green or yellow sputum
- Wheeziness
- High temperatures
- Headache
- Loss of appetite

The cough usually lasts between 7-10 days but can go on for 3 weeks.

What causes bronchitis?

Viruses are the main cause of bronchitis. There is a temporary inflammation of the windpipe and the airways. The inflammation causes swelling of the airways and a build up of thick mucus. This mucus is cleared from the airways by coughing. This cough can sometimes last for up to three weeks.

Do I need antibiotics?

Bronchitis does not usually need antibiotics because the infection is caused by a virus. You are more likely to experience side effects – such as diarrhoea – than get benefit. Bronchitis normally clears up within 7 – 10 days.

What treatment should I take?

There are 3 things that you can do to help;

- Drink plenty of fluids. You may well sweat more and it is important not to become dehydrated
- Take paracetamol or ibuprofen if you have a high temperature.
- Stop smoking. Smoking increases the chances of getting an infection in your lungs. If you need help in trying to stop book an appointment with the nurse or doctor when you feel better.

When should I come back and see the doctor?

You will need to seek medical help if;

- Your temperature is above 38C (100F)
- Sharp pain on breathing in
- Cough up blood stained mucus
- You are breathless at rest
- The cough lasts longer than 3 weeks
- Other people notice you become confused or disorientated
- Your pulse is faster than normal

We thank the doctors at Bishops Castle Medical Practice who created the original version of this leaflet