

Treatment of Bronchitis

What is bronchitis?

Bronchitis is an infection in your chest that is caused by germs. It is usually caused by viruses but can also be caused by bacteria. Cough is the main symptom. The cough may last for two or three weeks. You may also have fever, body aches, and wheezing.

Do antibiotics help?

Because antibiotics don't work against viruses, they usually don't help people with bronchitis. Antibiotics can also cause side effects, like diarrhea and thrush (a mouth infection). Using antibiotics when they're not needed can cause germs to become resistant to antibiotics. Antibiotics might be given to some patients with bronchitis caused by bacteria.

What can I do to feel better?

Most medicines don't help the symptoms of bronchitis. It is important to rest and drink enough fluids. Over-the-counter medicines for aches and fevers might help. But, over-the-counter cough medicines don't help much and shouldn't be used in children younger than six years. Cough drops, honey (not safe for babies), or a pill called pelargonium can be used to help with coughing and other symptoms.

Where can I get more information?

Your doctor

AAFP's Patient Education Resource

Web site: <http://familydoctor.org/677.xml>

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Notes:

This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Other health-related information is available from the AAFP online at <http://familydoctor.org>.

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