

Viruses cause many common infections. Antibiotics do not kill viruses only bacteria. Many infections caused by bacteria get better without an antibiotic.

We must not take antibiotics unnecessarily. This is because:

- Healthy people can fight off lots of infections caused by bacteria without the need for antibiotics. In fact we now know that many infections get better just as quickly without an antibiotic.
- If antibiotics are overused there is a risk of common bacteria becoming resistant. This means that antibiotics might not be as effective when they are really needed.
- Viruses cause most of the coughs and sore throats, cold and flu but antibiotics do not kill viruses.
- Antibiotics can have unpleasant side effects such as thrush, diarrhoea, rashes or feeling sick.

Some bacterial infections **do** need antibiotics but your doctor is skilled at checking you over to rule out serious infection.

MANAGING your CHESTY COUGH

Acute Bronchitis is common and is usually due to a virus. Infections with bacteria are less common.

- Cough is the main symptom.
- Fever, headache, cold symptoms, general aches and pains may also occur. Symptoms typically peak after 2 to 3 days and then gradually clear.
- Your cough is part of your body's defence mechanism; therefore it is likely to be the last symptom of your current illness to go back to normal.
- It commonly takes 2 to 3 weeks for the cough to go completely after the other symptoms have gone.

CHESTY COUGH

(ACUTE BRONCHITIS)



M A N A G I N G Y O U R C H E S T Y C O U G H

Most chesty illnesses get better on their own in people who are normally fit and well. Antibiotics do not help a cough get better any quicker and our body's defence system will fight off the infection. There is no 'quick fix' for the cough. Patience is needed until it goes.

- Get plenty of rest.
- Take paracetamol, according to the instructions on the packet, to bring down your temperature or if you are in any discomfort.
- Drink plenty of water or soft drinks.
- Speak to your local pharmacist about other remedies you can safely take for your symptoms.
- If you smoke, now is a good time to stop. Bronchitis, chest infections and serious lung disease are more common in smokers.

Acute bronchitis usually clears without complications. Occasionally the infection can travel to the lung tissue and cause pneumonia.

Consult a doctor if any of the following occur:

- If fever, wheezing or headaches become worse or severe
- Fast breathing or shortness of breath
- Chest pain or if you cough up blood
- Drowsiness or confusion
- A cough that persists longer than 3 to 4 weeks
- If you already have a chest complaint
- Any other symptoms that develop that you are concerned about.

