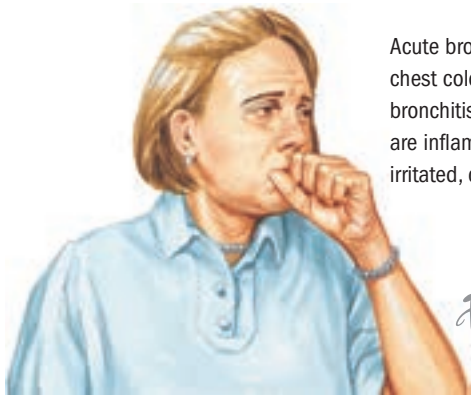
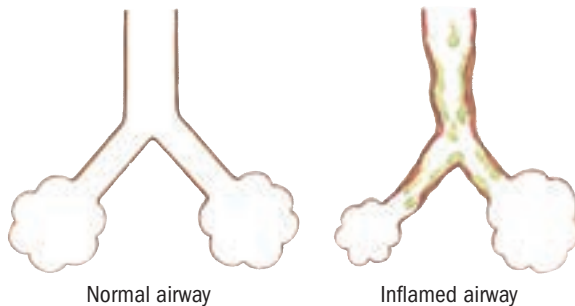


# MANAGING YOUR ACUTE BRONCHITIS



Acute bronchitis, also called a chest cold, is common. In acute bronchitis, your large airways are inflamed and become irritated, causing you to cough.



Common symptoms include fever, headache, and shortness of breath.

The usual cause is a viral infection, most likely after cold or flu symptoms.



The health care provider will ask about your symptoms, do a physical examination, and listen to your lungs with a stethoscope. X-rays may be done for long-term or severe symptoms.

## What Is Acute Bronchitis?

Acute bronchitis is inflammation (irritation) of the large airways (or bronchial tubes) in the lungs. Acute means that the bronchitis starts suddenly. This common condition is sometimes called a chest cold.

Coughing results from this inflammation and irritation of the lining of these large airways. Also, glands in the airways produce too much mucus (slimy, thick fluid that moistens and protects many passages in the body). This inflammation and mucus cause airways to narrow, resulting in noisy breathing.

Complete recovery can occur within 10 to 14 days, but the cough may last longer. Smokers have a slower recovery time. Acute bronchitis can sometimes lead to the more serious pneumonia. Repeated attacks of acute bronchitis may mean the presence of long-standing (chronic) bronchitis, asthma, or another lung disorder.

## What Causes Acute Bronchitis?

The usual cause is a viral infection, most likely after cold or flu symptoms. Other causes include bacteria and irritation of the large airways by chemicals, fumes, dust, or pollutants.

Smokers and people with lung problems, such as chronic bronchitis, asthma, or cystic fibrosis, are more likely to get acute bronchitis.

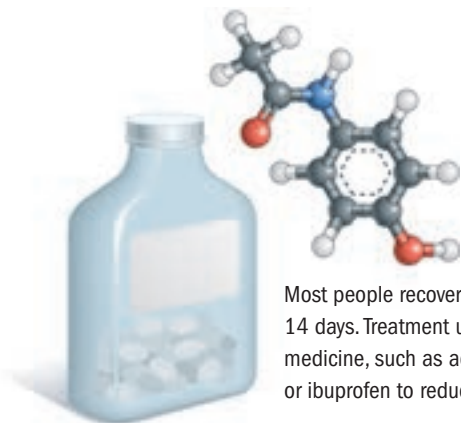
## What Are the Symptoms of Acute Bronchitis?

Symptoms include those of the common cold, such as runny nose and sore throat, fever, headache, aches and pains, cough with mucus, wheezing, shortness of breath, and chest pain when breathing deeply or coughing.

## How Is Acute Bronchitis Diagnosed?

The health care provider will ask about symptoms, do a physical examination, and listen to the lungs with a stethoscope.

For long-term or severe symptoms, the health care provider may order a chest x-ray to exclude more serious infections such as pneumonia. Blood tests aren't normally needed.



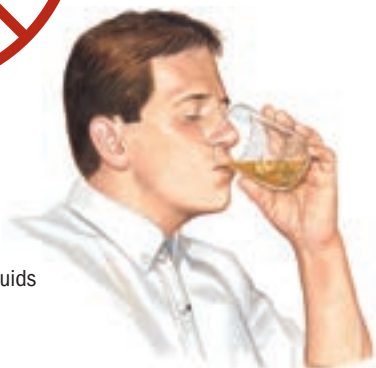
Most people recover within 10 to 14 days. Treatment usually includes medicine, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen to reduce fever and pain.



Your health care provider may recommend use of bronchodilators, given by inhalers, to open up your airways and help breathing.



Smoking makes your recovery harder. Quit smoking to recover faster and help prevent future episodes.



Drink plenty of noncaffeinated fluids such as water and fruit juice.

## How Is Acute Bronchitis Treated?

Antipyretic medicines reduce body temperature and analgesic drugs ease chest discomfort and body aches. These drugs include acetaminophen and ibuprofen.

Cough syrups may or may not work, and some make people drowsy.

Decongestants can help with cold symptoms.

Bronchodilators, usually given by inhaler, open the airways and help with breathing.

People with acute bronchitis don't usually need antibiotics because the cause is a virus and antibiotics treat bacterial infections. However, if the health care provider suspects bacteria as the cause, antibiotics may be given.

## DOs and DON'Ts in Managing Acute Bronchitis:

- ✓ **DO** quit smoking if you smoke.
- ✓ **DO** avoid smoky environments.
- ✓ **DO** drink plenty of noncaffeinated fluids, such as water and fruit juices.
- ✓ **DO** get plenty of rest.
- ✓ **DO** use a room humidifier or damp towels for increased humidity in your room.
- ✓ **DO** wash your hands often to prevent spread of infection.
- ✓ **DO** call your health care provider if you become short of breath or cough up blood.
- ✓ **DO** call your health care provider if your cough lasts longer than 3 weeks.
- ⊗ **DON'T** go out in cold or damp weather.
- ⊗ **DON'T** delay in getting medical care if your symptoms worsen, don't improve, or you get new symptoms.

## FROM THE DESK OF

### NOTES

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

#### Contact the following source:

- Medline Plus  
U.S. National Library of Medicine  
8600 Rockville Pike  
Bethesda, MD 20894

Website: <http://medlineplus.gov/>