

Chest infections are very common, especially during autumn and winter, or after a cold or flu. Most short term coughs are due to a viral infection and will usually disappear within 3 weeks. Although most are mild and get better on their own, some cases can be very serious, even life-threatening. Antibiotics do not work for viral infections.



The main symptoms of a chest infection are:

- A chesty cough
- Breathing difficulties
- Chest pain

It's also common to get headaches and have a high temperature.

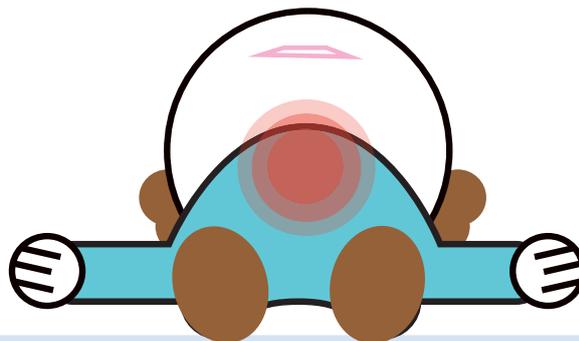
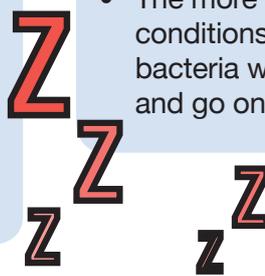
If you have a chest infection, you should:

- Get plenty of rest
- Drink lots of fluid to prevent dehydration and to thin the mucus in your lungs, making it easier to cough up
- Treat headaches, fever and aches and pains with paracetamol or ibuprofen
- Stop smoking straight away

Antibiotics

Your GP will not routinely prescribe antibiotics for acute bronchitis for a number of important reasons:

- Most cases of acute bronchitis are caused by viral infections which means that antibiotics will have no effect.
- You are almost as likely to experience a side effect from taking antibiotics, like vomiting and diarrhoea, as you are to receive any benefit from the treatment.
- The more antibiotics are used to treat mild conditions, the greater the likelihood that the bacteria will develop resistance to antibiotics and go on to cause more serious infections.



For more information, help and support go to www.choosewellmanchester.org.uk or visit NHS Choices at www.nhs.uk

Choose the right care

The use of antibiotics is usually only recommended if it is thought that you have an increased risk of developing a secondary lung infection, like pneumonia, due to factors like:

- Being over 75 years of age and having a high temperature (fever) of 38C (100.4F) or above
- Having long-term problems with your lungs or heart, like chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) or heart failure

- Having a weakened immune system (immunocompromised) as a result of a condition, like diabetes or cancer, or due to certain types of medical treatment, like chemotherapy

What to do next...



Choose care at home if...

- You have a mild to moderate cough or chest infection
- Follow the self care instructions above and it will clear up within three weeks



Choose your GP or GP out-of-hours service if...

- You have a high temperature (this can be a sign of a more serious infection)
- You have confusion or disorientation
- You have a sharp pain in your chest that gets worse as you breathe in
- You are coughing up blood-stained phlegm (thick mucus)
- your symptoms last longer than three weeks



Call 999 A&E if...

- You have a sudden shortness of breath or rapid breathing
- Your lips or tongue begin to turn blue
- You feel like you're suffocating
- You bring up pink frothy phlegm



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