

Cough with Phlegm

Coughing alone is not actually a disease, but it is an indication of problems in the respiratory tract. In fact, a **cough** is a self-defense mechanism, triggered by the presence of any foreign or unwanted particles in the respiratory tract. And phlegm is nothing but the mucus secreted by the **lungs** in response to infection. Post nasal drip, a manifested symptom of cold, sinusitis and pneumonia may also result in phlegm buildup in the throat. When the mucus is expelled out of the body and becomes visible, it is called phlegm or sputum.



Prevention is Better Than Cure and this Motto is Especially True for Influenza

Clean and hygienic environment and personal habits are the most important steps in preventing the flu. To reduce the infection risk even further, vaccination for children and adults is recommended. **Bronchitis** in the acute form is not dangerous and needs to run its course. To prevent chronic bronchitis, avoid smoking and air pollutants. In the matter of flu vs bronchitis, one aspect is clear - keep clean and at the first sign of trouble, visit a doctor.

Other Than These Remedies, Certain Lifestyle and Dietary Changes are Also Advisable

Avoid consuming tobacco and excess of caffeine. So, cut down on your smoking, and make sure that you get enough exercise. Make it a point to go for a walk early in the morning. The fresh air will really make a big difference to your health. Take extra care during seasons when your symptoms worsen. These home remedies will make your immune system stronger and reduce the recurrent bouts of bronchitis.

Though not very reliable, the phlegm color meaning helps in quick identification of the underlying reason for **wet cough**. While yellow or green mucus denotes infection in the respiratory tract or lungs, gray or brown phlegm is due to inhalation of dust, fumes, tar, and similar pollutants. Also, the consistency of the expectorate is checked in sputum examination to confirm the causes. If required, the doctor will suggest chest X-ray, blood tests, and other diagnostic tests to rule out severe diseases.

Diagnosis

The condition is generally diagnosed through an X-ray of the chest or a CT-scan. However, nowadays, chest computed tomography (CMT) is the most common method used to check the formation of bullae and their size. It has also been observed that patients with amyloidosis generally show an obvious formation of bullae. Researchers working in this field have referred to bullae as paper bags, which on getting filled assume a spherical shape. There is an internal gas exchange that keeps on happening within the bullae. This is the primary reason because of which the bullae do not take part in the respiration process though they stay in the path of the air passage. The formation of bullae in the lungs may take a bad shape and result in dyspnea.

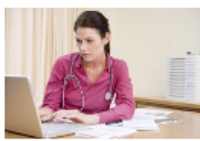
Causes of Productive Cough

The underlying causes of productive cough may be mild to severe. For example, chesty cough resulted due to common cold is easily treatable; whereas those caused due to emphysema or other chronic lung problems are life-threatening. Frequent exposure (or inhalation) to chemical irritants, smokes, fumes, environmental pollutants, and alike allergens may also trigger cough with phlegm. In most patients, productive cough is commonly manifested in the morning.

Nasal Decongestant

Nasal decongestants or sprays are often prescribed for people who have blocked nasal passages, which may be due to common cold, flu, or sinus infection. Also, inhaling steam and taking steam baths help in clearing nasal congestion and removing mucus efficiently.

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Tight Chest and Shortness of Breath Chest pain and breathing difficulty (known as dyspnea) do not always show an impending heart attack. Someone going through these types of symptoms may not be suffering from a cardiac problem. Although the signs and symptoms are mainly associated...

Almost all of us have experienced productive cough, which may be because of a common cold, bronchitis, or other respiratory tract infections. Coughing up phlegm is rather a good sign, as accumulation of the same can lead to chest infections and other medical complications. Nevertheless, a chronic cough condition with phlegm that is discolored (yellow, rusty-brown, green, etc.) should not be neglected, as it can be a symptom of some serious lung ailments.

Prognosis

The most obvious symptom of this condition is trouble while breathing, when exerting oneself. But such a symptom does not alarm the individual, because he might feel he is not used to the exercise or just inactive. When breathing becomes difficult in simple, less strenuous activities, like walking or, even while sitting still or sleeping, that's when an individual realizes that something is wrong. The first step in diagnosing, is a physical examination. Standard tests are chest x-rays and a high resolution computerized tomography (HRCT). This lung condition is varied in type and each case has unique causes, so misdiagnoses can be made. The most accurate and final step in testing, is a lung biopsy, which carries out an extensive tissue sample analysis.

Influenza

The symptoms of influenza and the common cold are similar, however the two diseases are not the same, with different effects on the body. It is caused by viruses made up of RNA (Ribonucleic acid), as opposed to the rhinoviruses and coronaviruses of the common cold. Influenza is not meant to be taken lightly. Its virus form and family can cause serious harm, in a short infection period. It kills between 3,300 - 50,000 people per year. Flu is extremely contagious in nature, as the viruses adapt and evolve into new strains on infection. The best example of this adaptation is swine flu, where the virus family combined from 3 different species (human, bird and pig), to create a deadly influenza strain. The range of contagion is anyone within 6 feet can pick up the flu from an infected person. This characteristic of influenza can cause epidemics and on a world-wide scale, cause a pandemic.

To sum up the difference between bronchitis and flu, here is a tabular comparison of the basic facts:

| Name\ Feature | Flu | Bronchitis | Body Areas Affected | Nose, throat and lungs | Lungs | Chemical Make-up | RNA viruses | Viruses and bacteria | Who Is At Risk |
|---|------------------------------|------------|------------------------|------------------------|----------|------------------|---|----------------------|--|
| Elderly, infants, pregnant women, kidney, heart or lung disease victims | Infants, seniors and smokers | Types | Influenza Type A, B, C | Chronic and acute | Duration | days | Acute - 1 week to a month, Chronic - 2-3 months in a year | Complications | Pneumonia, brain infection, bronchitis, sinus and ear infections |
| Pneumonia, pulmonary hypertension. | | | | | | | | | |

Case of chronic conditions, wherein cough with phlegm do not show prompt results with the above mentioned natural remedies, it is imperative to take medical help, rather than resorting to self medication. After conducting diagnostic tests, the physician will prescribe therapeutic drugs appropriate for patient's condition.

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