**Lung Diseases**

Chronic Bronchitis

What is chronic bronchitis?

Bronchitis is the inflammation of the larger airways in your lungs, usually because of infection of a virus. The inflammation is sometimes caused by bacteria, or breathing in dust or smoke (Health Direct, n.d.). Bronchitis can be acute or chronic. Chronic bronchitis is usually related to smoking. People with chronic bronchitis get irritated and inflamed bronchi, as well as coughs for at least 3 months a year for two years in a row.

Causes of chronic bronchitis

Chronic Bronchitis is often caused by cigarette smoking. Exposure to environmental toxins, such as air pollution or secondhand smoke can also cause chronic bronchitis (Healthline, 2017). More than 90% of the people with chronic bronchitis smoke or used to smoke (WebMD, 2022). Breathing in irritants such as smoke, smog, or chemical fumes can also lead to bronchitis as it causes inflammation in your trachea and bronchial tubes.

Symptoms of chronic bronchitis

Some of the symptoms of bronchitis are coughing, fever, wheezing, aches and pains, chest tightness, feeling short of breath (Health Direct, n.d.). People with bronchitis may have a cough that lasts several weeks or even a few months depending on how long it takes for the bronchial tubes to fully heal. Symptoms of bronchitis can flare up regularly. This happens in winter months for many people. Some more symptoms of bronchitis include a sore throat, a blocked nose and sinuses, and headaches. Bronchitis is not, however, the only condition that causes a cough. Anyone with a persistent cough should see a doctor for a diagnosis (Medical News Today, 2022).

Treatments for chronic bronchitis

Changing your lifestyle and medication can lessen the symptoms of your chronic bronchitis and may slow or stop the disease from getting worse. If you smoke, you must quit, however, your lungs will not fully recover, the rate of decline will be much slower. Some of the treatments you could get are airway openers, anti-inflammatory drugs, oxygen therapy, specialized rehab program, lung transplant. Airway openers relax your air passages making it easier to breathe and relieving symptoms. Steroids lessen the swelling that narrows in your air passages. Oxygen therapy is used for serious cases and the patient can inhale oxygen from a portable machine at home. Specialized rehab programs can teach you ways to manage your disease. A lung transplant may also help you live longer (WebMD, 2022).

Prevention

To reduce the risk of bronchitis you should avoid cigarette smoke, get vaccinated, wash your hands, wear a surgical mask. Cigarette smoke increases your risk of chronic bronchitis so you should avoid it. Getting a yearly vaccine can help you against the flu so it may also reduce your chances of getting bronchitis as in most cases it is caused by influenza. Washing your hands frequently reduces your risk of catching a viral infection. If you have COPD you might consider wearing a mask in areas where you are exposed to dust and areas that are crowded (Mayoclinic, 2022).

Pneumonia

What is pneumonia?

Pneumonia is a bacterial or viral infection of the lungs that inflames the air sacs in one or both lungs. It can range from mild to severe and in some cases, patients may need to go to the hospital. Anyone has the risk of getting pneumonia, however, the people that are more at risk are babies, smokers, patients in hospital, people who have chronic lung conditions, people with stressed or weak immune systems. Southern cross (2019) stated that “Pneumonia can develop when a person breathes in small droplets that contain pneumonia-causing organisms”.

Causes of pneumonia

Pneumonia can be caused by bacteria, viruses or fungi. Some of the common causes are cold and flu viruses, bacteria, smoking. Older people, people in hospital, babies, and people with weak immune systems are more likely to develop pneumonia as their immune systems are quite weak. Southern cross (2019) stated that “Pneumonia can develop when a person breathes in small droplets that contain pneumonia-causing organisms”.

Symptoms of pneumonia

Southern cross (2019) stated that “Viral pneumonia tends to develop slowly over a number of days, whereas bacterial pneumonia usually develops quickly, often over a day”. Most people who develop pneumonia start off with a viral infection such as cold or flu. Some of the symptoms of pneumonia are fever, rapid breathing, chest pain, chills, worsening cough, shortness of breath. Babies and children may have less specific symptoms, not showing clear signs of a chest infection. They will usually have a fever, appear unwell, and become lethargic, and may also have noisy or rattly breathing. People over the age of 65, however, may show signs of reduced mental awareness and confusion.

Treatments for pneumonia

Most cases of pneumonia can be treated at home, however, if more severe symptoms are shown you should be admitted to hospital for treatment. Some home-based treatments include rest, drinking plenty of fluids, antibiotics, pain-relieving medication, paracetamol. Antibiotics, pain-relieving medication, and paracetamol can reduce your fever and pain. Drinking plenty of fluids helps loosen mucus in the lungs. Some hospital-based treatments include physiotherapy, antibiotics given intravenously, intravenous fluids, and oxygen therapy. Physiotherapy helps clear the sputum from the lungs. Antibiotics can help with fever. Intravenous fluids are used to correct dehydration or if the person is too unwell to eat and drink. Oxygen therapy is used to ensure the body is getting the oxygen it needs (Southern cross, 2019).

Prevention

To reduce the risk of contracting pneumonia you could quit smoking and ensure a smoke-free household, avoid contact with people who have colds, flus and other infections, keeping your home warm and well ventilated, washing hands regularly, staying vaccinated, and breastfeeding your baby (Southern cross, 2019). Breastfeeding your baby helps boost their immune system. Avoiding contact with people who have colds and other infections reduces your risk of getting pneumonia. Vaccinations help keep your immune system boosted. Washing your hands and having other good hygiene and health habits will also reduce your risk of developing pneumonia.

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