Definition

**Expel air from the lungs with a sudden sharp sound.**

A cough is your body's way of responding when something irritates your throat or airways. An irritant stimulates nerves that send a message to your brain. The brain then tells muscles in your chest and abdomen to push air out of your lungs to force out the irritant.

Types of cough

Coughing can protect you from smoke, mucus, dust and pollen. But a cough can also signal an illness or severe health condition.

1. wet
2. dry
3. paroxysmal
4. croup.

1. Wet cough

This kind of cough sounds wet because it brings up mucus. More commonly known as a “productive” cough, it can be “acute,” lasting less than three weeks, or “chronic,” lasting up to several months.

A wet productive cough usually happens because something is irritating your respiratory tract, like an infection.

**A wet cough is a normal symptom of:**

* cold or flu
* asthma
* bronchitis
* chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
* pneumonia.

2. Dry cough

A dry cough feels like a tickle in the back of your throat. It can also lead to bouts of long, hacking coughing. It usually does not bring up mucus called nonproductive cough. Dry coughs can be caused by inflammation in your respiratory system. This kind of cough can linger for several weeks after the end of your cold or flu.

**A dry cough can be a symptom of:**

* cold or flu
* allergies
* asthma
* COVID-19
* croup
* gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD)
* irritants such as air pollution, dust or smoke
* laryngitis
* medicines such as ACE inhibitors
* sinusitis
* sore throat
* tonsillitis

3. Paroxysmal cough

A paroxysmal cough is violent and uncontrolled coughing that is exhausting and painful. You may struggle to breathe and may even vomit. Pertussis or whooping cough is the most common cause of a **paroxysmal cough. Other causes include:**

* asthma
* choking
* COPD
* pneumonia
* tuberculosis

4. Croup cough

Croup is a viral infection that causes irritation and swelling in the upper airway, making it difficult to breathe. A croup cough has a distinctive “barking” sound and can cause a raspy voice and squeaky breathing. Croup usually affects children 5 and younger. Croup is typically contagious for up to three days after symptoms begin or the fever breaks. Croup usually does not impact adults whose airways are larger than a child’s.

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Signs and Symptoms of a Cough

Coughs can be either acute or chroni and sub-acute.

| **Type** | **Duration of Cough** |
| --- | --- |
| [Acute cough](https://www.verywellhealth.com/what-is-causing-my-cough-1191888) | Less than three weeks |
| [Sub-acute cough](https://www.verywellhealth.com/treatments-for-lingering-cough-4107545) | Three to eight weeks |
| [Chronic cough](https://www.verywellhealth.com/persistent-cough-causes-evaluation-2249305) | More than eight weeks |

Chronic Cough

### A chronic cough is one that lasts for more than eight weeks but can sometimes persist for years. Although a chronic cough can be attributed to any number of conditions, the majority of cases are related to a small handful of them.

### The seven most common causes of a chronic caugh are:

### • Upper airway cough syndrome (especially in people with compromised immune systems)

### • Asthma

### • GERD (especially a form known as laryngopharyngeal reflux)

### • Chronic bronchitis due to smoking

### • pertussis, HIV, inflammatory bowel disease, and autoimmune diseases)

### The use of angiotensin-converting-enzyme (ACE) inhibitors (such as lisinopril and similar drugs ending with "-pril")

### Less common causes of chronic cough include:

### • Sarcoidosis (an inflammatory condition that causes the formation of granular clumps in the lungs and other organs)

### • Tuberculosis (TB)

### • Bronchiectasis (the widening of the airways caused by numerous conditions, including COPD)

### • Non-asthmatic eosinophilic bronchitis (NAEB)

### • Heart failure

### • Bronchogenic carcinoma (cancer primarily affecting the airways of the lungs)

### • Cancer metastasis (spread of cancer) to the lungs

### • Pharyngeal dysfunction, in which the passage between the mouth and windpipe malfunctions, allowing food and other substances to enter the lungs

### • Psychogenic cough (a habitual cough of psychological origin)

Acute Cough

Broadly speaking, an acute cough is either the sign of a rapidly developing infection or an acute exacerbation of a chronic illness.

**The most common causes of an acute cough include:**

### [Common cold](https://www.verywellhealth.com/common-cold-overview-4581982)

### [Influenza](https://www.verywellhealth.com/learn-about-different-types-of-flu-770509)

### [Upper respiratory infection](https://www.verywellhealth.com/upper-respiratory-infection-overview-4582263) (including [sinusitis](https://www.verywellhealth.com/sinus-infection-overview-83143), [pharyngitis](https://www.verywellhealth.com/overview-of-sore-throat-1191991), and [epiglottitis](https://www.verywellhealth.com/epiglottitis-1191900))

### [Acute bronchitis](https://www.verywellhealth.com/symptoms-of-bronchitis-770332)

### [Croup](https://www.verywellhealth.com/facts-about-croup-1298410#:~:text=Croup%20is%20a%20catch%2Dall,the%20doctor%2C%20but%20probably%20not.)

### [Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)](https://www.verywellhealth.com/facts-about-croup-1298410#:~:text=Croup%20is%20a%20catch%2Dall,the%20doctor%2C%20but%20probably%20not.)

### [Upper airway cough syndrome](https://www.verywellhealth.com/is-post-nasal-drip-caused-by-allergies-83154) (a.k.a. post-nasal drip, often related to [allergic rhinitis](https://www.verywellhealth.com/treatment-of-allergic-rhinitis-83133) or [non-allergic rhinitis](https://www.verywellhealth.com/non-allergic-rhinitis-83141))

### [Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)](https://www.verywellhealth.com/copd-4014741) exacerbations

### [Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD)](https://www.verywellhealth.com/what-causes-gerd-1741914) exacerbations

### [Acute left heart failure with congestion](https://www.verywellhealth.com/congestive-heart-failure-4582224)

### Asthma exacerbations

### Covid-related upper respiratory infection and cough

Risk Factors

Common risk factors in the development of cough include:

• Upper respiratory tract infections.

• Allergies.

• Smoking.

• Air pollution due to aerosolized chemicals, dust, smoke, etc.

• Uncontrolled Bronchial asthma & other chronic diseases.

Sounds developed by cough

The use of cough sound descriptors was examined in two different ways.

Firstly, the cough descriptors were grouped into those traditionally implying cough with mucus (moist, productive, rattling and loose), cough without mucus (dry, barking, hoarse) and cough with wheeze (wheezy).

LAB findings

Commonly these include blood tests, sputum (mucus) tests, imaging tests such as a chest X-ray or Computerized tomography CT scan, spirometry or a methacholine challenge test, **Bronchoscopy, Rhinoscopy**

Treatment

Determining the cause of chronic cough is crucial to effective treatment. In many cases, more than one underlying condition may be causing your chronic cough.

If you are currently smoking, your doctor will discuss with you your readiness to quit and provide assistance to achieve this goal.

If you're taking an ACE inhibitor medication, your doctor may switch you to another medicine that doesn't have cough as a side effect.

Medications used to treat chronic cough may include:

* **Antihistamines, corticosteroids and decongestants.** These drugs are standard treatment for allergies and postnasal drip.
* **Inhaled asthma drugs.** The most effective treatments for asthma-related cough are corticosteroids and bronchodilators, which reduce inflammation and open up your airways.
* **Antibiotics.** If a bacterial, fungal or mycobacterial infection is causing your chronic cough, your doctor may prescribe medications to address the infection.
* **Acid blockers.** When lifestyle changes don't take care of acid reflux, you may be treated with medications that block acid production. Some people need surgery to resolve the problem.

## Lifestyle and home remedies

Follow the plan your doctor gives you for treating the cause of your cough. In the meantime, you can also try these tips to ease your cough:

* **Drink fluids.** Liquid helps thin the mucus in your throat. Warm liquids, such as broth, tea or juice, can soothe your throat.
* **Suck on cough drops or hard candies.** They may ease a dry cough and soothe an irritated throat.
* **Consider taking honey.** A teaspoon of honey may help loosen a cough. Don't give honey to children younger than 1 year old because honey can contain bacteria harmful to infants.
* **Moisturize the air.** Use a cool-mist humidifier or take a steamy shower.
* **Avoid tobacco smoke.** Smoking or breathing secondhand smoke irritates your lungs and can worsen coughs caused by other factors. If you smoke, talk with your doctor about programs and products that can help you quit.