

Patient Advisory

Cough

About Cough

A cough is a sudden, often repetitive, contraction of the chest (thoracic cavity). It is characterized by a rapid and forceful expulsion of air from the lungs to clear air passages of any irritants or mucus. Most cases of cough resolve without any treatment. However, excessive or persistent coughs may indicate an underlying disease and require treatment.

Common Causes

Some of the common causes of cough are:

- Exposure to allergens like dust and pollens.
- Infections like a sore throat, common cold and sinus infections.
- Respiratory problems like bronchitis and asthma.
- Smoking.

Diagnosis of the Causes of Cough

The medical history and a physical examination are usually sufficient to diagnose the condition. Occasionally your Doctor may conduct some tests if the cough is persistent or doesn't respond to initial treatment to diagnose the underlying pathology.

Treatment

The treatment of cough depends on the underlying conditions. Your Doctor may give you any of these medications depending upon your symptoms. Make sure you understand from the Doctor or Nurse what these are or if you need to take any precautions with them.

Class of medicine	Objective	Examples
Analgesics/antipyretics	To relieve pain / fever	Paracetamol
<i>Decongestants or antihistamine</i> <i>Nasal drops/ spray</i>	To clear nasal congestion	Diphenhydramine Phenylephrine
Anti-tussives and expectorants (prevent excessive coughing)	To prevent excessive cough	Codiene Dextromethorphan Guaiphenesin Ambroxol
Antiallergic	To reduce the runny nose and cough	Cetirizine Loratadine
Antibiotics	To relieve chest infection	Erythromycin

		Cephalexin Ciprofloxacin Doxycycline Amoxicillin
Glucocorticoids and bronchodilators (inhalers or spray)	To relieve chest congestion and ease breathing	Beclomethasone salbutamol
Proton Pump Inhibitors	To reduce acidity / heart burn	Omeprazole

Precautions with your medication:

Some medicines need to be taken with food while others may require specific precautions. Speak to your Doctor or Nurse to understand any precautions needed with medication.

If you have been prescribed Antibiotics then note that:

- Do not skip doses. Follow the dosing instructions carefully and allow recommended routine of doses
- Stopping antibiotics early after the infection improves or you feel better can allow the infection to return, and add to the growing problem of antibiotic-resistant bacteria
- Some antibiotics can be taken with food, while others can't. For specific details, you should speak to your doctor. Any antibiotic that can be taken with food can be taken with milk, EXCEPT tetracyclines

Your doctor would warn you against the side effects of some of the medicines. Side effects of some of the drugs are:

- Antihistamines (Diphenhydramine) or Antiallergic (Cetirizine) may cause dizziness, dry mouth and increased sleep: Driving and working with machines after antihistamines can be dangerous,
- Antibiotics can cause stomach upset. Ensure you are taking a healthy diet when on antibiotics.
- Inhaled glucocorticoids (Beclomethasone) may cause dryness and irritation in nose; smell and taste disturbances; hoarseness.
- Omeprazole (PPI) may cause diarrhoea or constipation, flatulence (gas), altered taste

Care and Prevention

You may follow some simple measures to relieve pain and discomfort of the throat:

- Gargle with warm water or use throat lozenges (strepsils) if you have sore throat.
- Try home remedies which have been tried and tested such as ginger, tulsi, honey or lemon in warm water or light tea.

- Inhale steam to reduce throat irritation
- Avoid allergens like pollens / dust / road / work pollution
- Avoid crispy, oily or spicy food, as they may irritate the throat.
- Maintain a healthy diet and adequate hydration.
- Avoid smoking

Monitoring your condition

Your Doctor would have set up a follow-up visit for you. In the meantime it would help the clinic if you monitor your symptoms like:

- Are there any particular triggers that worsen your symptoms at home or work?
- Is it worsening at any particular time during day / night? Also what improves it.
- Monitor any high fever or breathlessness episodes.
- Monitor sputum for any blood or pus. (if you note any then visit the clinic)
- Monitor any side effects or allergies after starting treatment. Report any reactions or allergies to your doctor

At your next visit take any previous records or medications that you may have been taking. Such information will help your Doctor understand your condition better.

When to Contact a Doctor

You may need to consult with your Doctor if your cough persists or worsens after starting treatment. You may also need to seek immediate medical help in case the cough is accompanied by any of the following:

- Phlegm with traces of blood.
- Difficulty in breathing.
- Swelling of the feet.
- Pain in the chest
- Persisting high fever

If you have any respiratory or cardiac problem, if you have persistent cough you should immediately see your doctor. If you get breathless at rest or have intractable cough then visit the hospital.

If after starting treatments you experience any reactions or allergies then immediately contact your clinic. For example,

Rashes, itching, wheezing (noisy breathing) or breathlessness, swelling of the face, lips or eyes, unusual bruising or bleeding then stop medication and contact your Doctor immediately.

Special note for patients on Tuberculosis treatment

How do I take this medicine?

Take TB medication exactly as directed by your doctor. Do not take more or less than instructed by your doctor.

Take your medication together with food or immediately after a meal. Take the specified drugs at regular intervals as instructed by your doctor. Do not skip any doses.

Continue with treatment even when you feel better. You must complete the entire course of TB medicine. If you don't, the infection will not clear completely and will become even harder to treat. Your doctor will advise you about how long you need to be treated. Make sure that you follow your doctor's instructions. Complete the entire treatment course.

What should I do if I have forgotten to take this medicine?

Take the missed dose as soon as you remember. If it is almost time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and return to your normal dosing schedule.

DO NOT double a dose under any circumstances.

When should I not use this medicine?

Stop medication if you experience an allergic reaction (breathlessness, rashes, swollen eyes) to TB medication. Alert your doctor.

Inform your doctor if you frequently drink a lot of alcohol.

What must I do to prevent spreading TB to other people?

TB is spread through the air, especially when you cough, sneeze or laugh. Follow your Doctor's advice on precautions to prevent its spread.

Always cover your mouth when you cough, sneeze or laugh. Use tissue paper or handkerchief. Wash handkerchief separately. Do not spit in public. Pay special attention to your hygiene.

What side effects could I experience?

Tuberculosis medicines may cause nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, tiredness, headache and muscle pain. Alert your doctor if any of these side effects are severe or refuse to go away.

Alert your doctor quickly if you experience any of these side effects:

- Rashes

-Itching

- *Wheezing (noisy breathing) or breathlessness*
- *Difficulty swallowing*
- *Swelling of the face, lips or eyes*
- *Yellowing of the skin and eyes*
- *Dark or tea-colored urine and light-colored stools*
- *Unusual bruising or bleeding*

Are there any restrictions on the type of food I can take?

Avoid alcohol.

Caution Notice

This information is not a substitute for Doctor's advice. Only your Doctor can weigh all the diverse aspects of your condition and choose the treatment most likely to meet your needs.