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Acute Bronchitis

Bronchitis is an inflammation of the bronchial tubes, the airways that carry air to your lungs. It causes a cough that often brings up mucus. It can also cause shortness of breath, wheezing, a low fever, and chest tightness. There are two main types of bronchitis: acute and chronic [<https://medlineplus.gov/chronicbronchitis.html>] .

Most cases of acute bronchitis get better within several days. But your cough can last for several weeks after the infection is gone.


The same viruses that cause colds and the flu often cause acute bronchitis. These viruses spread through the air when people cough, or through physical contact (for example, on unwashed hands). Being exposed to tobacco smoke, air pollution, dusts, vapors, and fumes can also cause acute bronchitis. Less often, bacteria can also cause acute bronchitis.

To diagnose acute bronchitis, your health care provider will ask about your symptoms and listen to your breathing. You may also have other tests.



Treatments include rest, fluids, and aspirin (for adults) or acetaminophen to treat fever. A humidifier or steam can also help. You may need inhaled medicine to open your airways if you are wheezing. Antibiotics won't help if the cause is viral. You may get antibiotics if the cause is bacterial.

NIH: National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

Start Here

- **Acute Bronchitis** [<https://familydoctor.org/condition/acute-bronchitis/?adfree=true>] (American Academy of Family Physicians)
Also in Spanish [<https://es.familydoctor.org/condicion/bronquitis-aguda-es/?adfree=true>]
- **Acute Bronchitis** [<https://www.lung.org/lung-health-diseases/lung-disease-lookup/bronchitis>] (American Lung Association)
- **Bronchitis** [<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/bronchitis>]  (National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/es/salud/bronquitis>]
- **Chest Cold (Acute Bronchitis) Basics** [<https://www.cdc.gov/acute-bronchitis/about/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

Diagnosis and Tests

- **Arterial Blood Gas (ABG) Test** [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/blood-oxygen-level/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/prueba-de-gasometria-arterial/>]
- **Tests for Lung Disease** [<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/lung-tests>]  (National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/es/salud/pruebas-pulmonares>]

Prevention and Risk Factors

- **Is Acute Bronchitis Contagious?** [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/bronchitis/expert-answers/acute-bronchitis/faq-20057839?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/diseases-conditions/bronchitis/expert-answers/acute-bronchitis/faq-20057839?p=1>]



Treatments and Therapies

- Bronchitis Symptoms, Diagnosis, and Treatment [<https://www.lung.org/lung-health-diseases/lung-disease-lookup/bronchitis/symptoms-diagnosis-treatment>] (American Lung Association)

Related Issues

- Humidifiers: Ease Skin, Breathing Symptoms [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/common-cold/in-depth/humidifiers/ART-20048021?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)

Clinical Trials




- ClinicalTrials.gov: Bronchiolitis [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Bronchiolitis%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)
- ClinicalTrials.gov: Bronchitis [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Bronchitis%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)

Journal Articles


References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

- Article: Quality of patient-reported outcome measures for acute bronchitis: a systematic review... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40676390>]
- Article: Prediction of risk factors of plastic bronchitis in children with severe... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40544237>]
- Article: Bronchoalveolar lavage cytokine profile and clinical features as risk predictors of... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40483477>]
- Acute Bronchitis -- see more articles [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Bronchitis%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+%22last+1+Year%22+%5Bedat%5D+NOT+%28letter%5Bpt%5D+OR+case+reports%5Bpt%5D+OR+editorial%5Bpt%5D+OR+comment%5Bpt%5D%29+AND+free+full+text%5Bsb%5D+>]

Reference Desk

- Bronchi, Bronchial Tree, and Lungs [<https://training.seer.cancer.gov/anatomy/respiratory/passages/bronchi.html>]  (National Cancer Institute)
- How the Lungs Work [<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/lungs>]   (National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/es/salud/pulmones>]

Find an Expert

- American Lung Association [<https://www.lung.org/>]
- National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute [<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/>] 

Children

- Bronchitis (For Parents) [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/bronchitis.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/bronchitis.html>]
- Plastic Bronchitis (For Parents) [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/plastic-bronchitis.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/plastic-bronchitis.html>]

Patient Handouts

- Acute bronchitis [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001087.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/001087.htm>]

- **Postural drainage** [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000051.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000051.htm>]
- **Sputum culture** [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003723.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003723.htm>]



MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

- Acute bronchitis [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001087.htm>]
- Blood gases [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003855.htm>]
- Bronchiolitis [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000975.htm>]
- Chest x-ray [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003804.htm>]
- Industrial bronchitis [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000072.htm>]
- Oxygen safety [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000049.htm>]
- Postural drainage [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000051.htm>]
- Sputum culture [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003723.htm>]

Related Health Topics

- Common Cold [<https://medlineplus.gov/commoncold.html>]
- Respiratory Syncytial Virus Infections [<https://medlineplus.gov/respiratorysyncytialvirusinfections.html>]

National Institutes of Health

The primary NIH organization for research on *Acute Bronchitis* is the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute [<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/>]

Other Languages

Find health information in languages other than English [<https://medlineplus.gov/languages/acutebronchitis.html>] on *Acute Bronchitis*

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