

Managing Bronchitis Symptoms and Knowing the Treatment

Inflammation of the respiratory tract that includes the trachea and the bronchus is known as bronchitis. This may be caused by viral or bacterial infection or constant exposure to pollutants (such as smoking and air pollution). There are two kinds, acute and chronic bronchitis.

Acute bronchitis usually takes place right after an infection of the upper respiratory tract has occurred like a sinus infection or the common cold. As for chronic bronchitis, there is no exact microorganism that can be pinpointed as a cause but smoking and environmental pollutants are believed to be the major culprits which then may be followed by bacterial or viral infection as the immune system becomes vulnerable.

Common symptoms of both kinds of bronchitis are nasal congestion, muscle pains, fever and chills, sore throat, poor sleep, and dyspnea (common in chronic bronchitis). Basically, the symptoms of bronchitis are similar to that of the common cold. It starts with an irritation at the back of the throat and as it gets worse, cough will enter the picture which may come with phlegm. If the phlegm is streaked with blood, it is best to consult a physician.

Cough is a universal symptom of bronchitis. This may be accompanied with sputum or not (dry cough). Sputum producing cough is a manifestation of an infection in the lower respiratory tract and the lungs. In acute bronchitis, cough may persist for more than fourteen days. Constant and vigorous coughing may leave the thoracic and abdominal muscles aching. Without proper medication, forceful coughing may even cause injury to the chest wall.

Uncomplicated bronchitis can be easily treated at home. Commonly, bronchitis (especially acute bronchitis) is caused by a viral infection. Virus-caused bronchitis is self-limiting and may require no major treatment except to alleviate symptoms and ease discomfort.

But if it is caused by bacterial infections, then antibiotics are prescribed. However, antibiotics should not be taken if bronchitis is caused by a virus. Doing so, will only be a waste of time and money. An over usage of antibiotics will only make certain types of bacteria to build resistance from the medication.

Since muscle aches can be experienced through the course of the disease, anti-

pain medications may be taken such as acetaminophen and aspirin. But bear in mind that an over dosage of these type of medications may cause gastric bleeding. These should be taken with a full stomach. Furthermore, aspirin is contraindicated for children and pregnant women. Aspirin is thought to be highly associated with Reye's syndrome in children, and it may cause severe bleeding in pregnant women.

To ease irritation in the respiratory tract, a cool mist humidifier may be employed. Taking large amounts of liquid helps out to ease fever because it tends to cool down the body temperature. Liquid intake also thins out or liquefies the phlegm, making it easier to cough it out. Another way to loosen up the phlegm is by taking an expectorant such as guaifenesin.

Further medical treatment will depend on the causative factor of bronchitis. If the patient is experiencing severe uncontrollable coughing, cough suppressants may be prescribed by the physician. But the before prescribing it, the physician will most likely test the individual to rule out other diseases.

Another kind of medication is the bronchodilator. This causes the respiratory tract tissues to dilate or open up which then promotes easy passage of air to the lungs. It consequently reduces wheezing.

Again, antibiotics may be used. Other than the reason of bacterial-caused infection in uncomplicated bronchitis is because individuals suffering from long term lung problems are more prone to bacteria infections because of their weakened immune systems.

In later stages of chronic bronchitis, the patient may call for supplemental oxygen to assist him or her in breathing. This oxygen therapy may be given during exercise to avoid dyspnea. And the patient may as well be hospitalized if the disease has become very severe and has developed complications.

To avoid further complications, patients may be required to receive an annual flu vaccine, as well as pneumococcal vaccine every five to seven years. Other medical treatments may also include mucolytic agents, antitussive medications, and alpha1 antitrypsin therapy.

Other treatments that can ease the symptoms of bronchitis are the use of herbal medicines. These can be formulated as inhalants and tea. Still, consult your physician if these additional herbal medicines won't interfere with the primary treatment.