

# Coughing caused by acute bronchitis

PATIENT  
INFORMATION

This leaflet explains what you can do to help and what you should think about when you have a cough and have been diagnosed with acute bronchitis.

## What is acute bronchitis?

Acute bronchitis is like having a cold in your airways. The mucous membranes in your airways going from the throat to the lungs swell and become irritated. Coughing is the most common symptom. You can cough up phlegm and have chest pain when coughing. You may also have a fever, a sore throat and a runny nose, especially for the first few days.

Acute bronchitis is caused by viruses or bacteria. It can feel uncomfortable but usually heals by itself. It sometimes takes several weeks before the cough stops completely.

## What you can do

- A hot drink can soothe a cough and help loosen phlegm.
- Sleeping with your head raised on an extra pillow can also help.
- Over-the-counter medications containing paracetamol or ibuprofen can relieve fever and chest pain.

Cough medications usually have a limited effect. The cough can be uncomfortable, but it is your body's way of protecting the lungs by removing

phlegm. Coughs are part of your body's defence system, so your cough may persist for some time once you have recovered from the infection. If you feel well, apart from the cough, you do not need to worry, especially if you are getting better.

Smoking makes symptoms worse and increases your risk of being affected again.

You can ask your pharmacist about other ways to relieve your symptoms. You can also get medical advice by calling 1177.

## What should you be aware of?

Please contact your healthcare provider again if

- your symptoms get worse
- you start coughing up blood
- you have a high fever
- your breathing becomes rapid.

You should also contact your healthcare provider if the cough has not cleared up after six weeks from the time you became ill. The same applies if you have a persistent cough several times a year.



Folkhälsomyndigheten

Strama

PLEASE TURN OVER... ➤

## Do antibiotics help with acute bronchitis?

Antibiotics do not help against acute bronchitis if your lungs are otherwise healthy. Even if your acute bronchitis is due to bacteria, antibiotics will not help you get better faster.

## Are there any disadvantages to antibiotics?

Antibiotics are important medications needed for a number of bacterial infections. They must only be taken when there is a clear benefit, as antibiotics also have disadvantages. Antibiotics also kill the 'good' bacteria in your body. Antibiotics can cause side effects, such as diarrhoea and rashes/hives.

The more antibiotics are used in society, the bigger the risk of bacteria becoming resistant to antibiotics and more difficult to treat. This is another reason why antibiotics must only be used when there is a benefit.

### Notes

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Call **1177** if you need medical advice. They will help you assess your symptoms or tell you where to go for treatment. You can also visit **[www.1177.se](http://www.1177.se)**

This information was produced by the Public Health Agency of Sweden and Strama, the Swedish strategic programme against antibiotic resistance. The fact sheet is part of the Antibiotic Smart Sweden initiative. The text is based on treatment recommendations from the Swedish Medical Products Agency. The information applies to the expected progression of common infections. The fact sheet can be downloaded in Swedish and several other languages from [www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/patinfo-bronkit](http://www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/patinfo-bronkit)

