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Acute Bronchitis

Symptoms:

- Cough productive of sputum
- Wheezing
- Cough at night
- Pain behind the sternum
- Cold symptoms – sore throat, runny nose, etc.

Signs:

- Might not look ill
- No temperature or low fever
- Sputum is usually clear or white
- When listened to with a stethoscope the lungs sound clear



Will Antibiotics Help?

- Studies have shown that acute bronchitis is most often caused by a virus. This means that antibiotics will not treat this illness.
- Antibiotics often have side effects: patients may experience upset stomach, diarrhea, headache, or allergic reaction to the medication.
- Taking antibiotics unnecessarily allows the bacteria to become resistant to the medication – meaning that our medicines may not work in the future when we need them.

General Information

- Bronchitis is the 9th most common illness seen in a doctor's office
- Majority of illness is due to a virus – not bacteria!
- Bronchitis usually goes away on its own
- On average acute bronchitis lasts for 7-10 days, but the cough can last much longer.

See a Doctor If...

- You have a chronic illness that affects the lungs such as COPD or emphysema, asthma or congestive heart failure (CHF).
- The illness lasts longer than one month
- Your sputum contains blood
- You have a high fever

Patient resources:

<http://www.aafp.org/afp/2004/0115/p387.html>