

Title: Acute Bronchitis

Author: Adam Chapweske

Date: 03/31/2010

Key words: acute bronchitis, cough, viral, respiratory, lung, infection, antibiotics

**Abstract:**

Acute bronchitis is a common cause of illness involving coughing. It is usually due to a viral infection, which usually runs its course within 7-10 days. There is no test for diagnosing it, though your doctor may perform certain tests to look for other causes of your symptoms. Treatment is aimed at helping your body fight the infection by getting plenty of rest and fluids. Adults may use acetaminophen or aspirin to reduce fever if present, though aspirin should NOT be given to children. Antibiotics are not usually necessary.

This document was created by a medical student enrolled in the Primary Care Clerkship at the University of Minnesota Medical School as part of the course project. The aim of the project is to present information on a medical topic in the format of a patient education handout. It does not necessarily reflect the views of the University of Minnesota Medical School physicians and faculty. These materials are provided for informational purposes only and are in no way intended to take the place of the advice and recommendations of your personal health care provider. The information provided may no longer be up to date since it has not been reviewed since the date of creation. The information provided should not be used to diagnose a health problem or disease, or as a means of determining treatment. In the event of a medical emergency, immediately contact a doctor or call 911.



# Acute Bronchitis

Causes and Treatment



## What you need to know about acute bronchitis:

- Common cause of acute cough
- Usually due to viral infection
- Typically resolves within 7-10 days
- Best treatment is rest and fluids
- Antibiotics not usually necessary



Adam Chapweske  
University of MN Medical School  
<http://conservancy.umn.edu>

## WHAT IS BRONCHITIS?

Bronchitis is inflammation of the lower airways that lead to the lungs. This can cause many symptoms including coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath, and fever.

## ACUTE VS. CHRONIC

There are two very different types of bronchitis: acute and chronic. Acute bronchitis is typically caused by an infection and lasts only a few days to weeks. Chronic bronchitis is often associated with cigarette smoking and lasts months to years.



## DIAGNOSIS

There is no single test that can diagnose acute bronchitis. Instead, your doctor will determine how likely it is based on your symptoms, risk factors, and an examination of your chest and lungs.

If the diagnosis cannot be made on this information alone, your doctor may order tests to look for other causes of your illness. This could include an x-ray of your chest, obtaining a sputum sample to check for bacteria, or drawing blood for further testing.



## TREATMENT

Since acute bronchitis is usually caused by a viral infection, treatment is aimed at helping your body fight that infection:

- Drink plenty of fluids
- Get plenty of rest
- Do not smoke

Adults may take acetaminophen or aspirin to reduce fever if present. Children may take acetaminophen, but should NOT take aspirin.

If there is concern for bacterial infection, your doctor may prescribe antibiotics. If that is the case, it is important to take them exactly as prescribed.

More information on this topic can be found on MEDLINE Plus:

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/001087.htm>