

Title: Antibiotics are of no benefit to smokers with bronchitis.

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Abstract: Antibiotics are frequently abused in cases of acute bronchitis, especially amongst smokers. This systematic review suggests that antibiotics are no more effective in smokers suffering acute bronchitis than in non-smokers.

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# What causes bronchitis?

The vast majority of acute bronchitis is caused by viruses. The most common viruses are:

Influenza A and B

Parainfluenza

Coronavirus

Rhinovirus

Respiratory syncytial virus

Human metapneumovirus

Less commonly, acute bronchitis may be caused by bacteria. The most common of these are:

*Mycoplasma pneumoniae*

*Chlamydia pneumonia*

*Bordetella pertussis*

# How do I know I have it?

The most common sign of acute bronchitis is a persistent cough that lasts between 10 and 20 days. The cough may produce mucous, but if it does that does not mean a bacterial infection is present. Most often, people with acute bronchitis will not have a fever.

Many diseases cause cough. In addition to acute bronchitis, pneumonia, influenza, asthma, and others may cause cough. If the cough gets better on its own, it is often not necessary to know what caused it. If the cough lasts for a long time or comes with concerning signs and symptoms such as fever, shortness of breath, wheezing, or feeling ill, the disease may be something more serious than acute bronchitis.



# How can I prevent spreading cough?

Wash your hands frequently.  
Cover your cough.

## To learn more:

American Lung Association  
61 Broadway, 6<sup>th</sup> floor  
New York, NY 10006  
(800) 586-4872  
[www.lungusa.org](http://www.lungusa.org)

# Acute Bronchitis

Common questions, easy answers.

# What is bronchitis?

Bronchitis is an infection of the respiratory tract that causes a cough. Something – a virus, bacteria, or irritant in the air you breath – causes inflammation of the airways that lead to the lungs. As a result, the airways create thick mucous that is often brought up with the cough. Unlike pneumonia, x-rays of the lungs of a person with bronchitis will be normal. The disease also goes away on its own – cough that lasts for more than five days is acute bronchitis, whereas cough that persists over a long period of time (three months of the year for two years in a row) is chronic bronchitis.



## How is bronchitis treated?

Most patients benefit from treatment of the symptoms of bronchitis. A class of medicines known as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs help to reduce the amount of inflammation in the airways. Common decongestants may also relieve stuffiness that comes with bronchitis. Some doctors may choose to give steroids for a cough that lasts longer than 20 days, however this has not been proven to be effective.

It is widely accepted that acute bronchitis should not be treated with antibiotics. Unfortunately, overuse of antibiotics in treating bronchitis is common. It has been found that 65-80% of patients treated for acute bronchitis are given antibiotics. The percentage is even higher for older patients and for smokers. Studies have shown that patients with acute bronchitis do not benefit from antibiotics. The only exception is if the cough is actually whooping cough. This disease is caused by a bacteria, and must be treated with an antibiotic.

