

# Cough

Each person has specific toxic exposures along with dietary and genetic weaknesses that are causing their symptoms. Toxic exposures can be inorganic like heavy metals, DDT, VOC's, Radio-active waste and any other chemical-like food additives or pesticides and fertilizers sprayed on the foods. They can also be organic or living organisms like parasites, bacteria, viruses, or fungi. All the different possible combinations make it difficult to accurately address issues unless you have experienced medical professionals mapping through all your different clinical symptoms.

Dr. Marilyn Tucker founded The Vibrant Health Community to do Symptom Mapping to be able to bring a completely personalized plan for each person. When you join the Vibrant Health Community you have your own medical team of doctor, pharmacist and health coach. This Team specializes in Integrative-Complementary Medicine. They will work with your personal physician to bring you to a place of as much natural healing as your body will allow. For those of you that have health issues that require prescription medications, your Team can help introduce natural measures that can reduce the imbalances and complications that inevitably come with prescription medication. This can reduce side effects and possible additional drugs having to be introduced.

## Definition

Coughing is an important way to keep your throat and airways clear. However, excessive coughing may mean you have an underlying disease or disorder.

Some coughs are dry, while others are considered productive. A productive cough is one that brings up mucus. Mucus is also called phlegm or sputum.

Coughs can be either acute or chronic:

- Acute coughs usually begin suddenly. They are often due to a cold, flu, or sinus infection. They usually go away after 2 to 3 weeks.
- Chronic coughs last longer than 2 to 3 weeks.

## Common Causes

Besides recent upper airway infections such as the common cold and flu, other common causes of coughs include:

- Allergies and asthma
- Lung infections such as pneumonia or acute bronchitis
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (emphysema or chronic bronchitis)
- Sinusitis leading to postnasal drip
- Lung disease such as bronchiectasis, interstitial lung disease, or tumors
- Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD)
- Cigarette smoking
- Exposure to secondhand smoke
- Exposure to air pollutants
- ACE inhibitors (medications used to control blood pressure)

If a child has a barking cough, see croup.

## Home Care

Although coughing can be a troubling symptom, it is usually your body's way of healing. Here are some tips to help ease your cough:

- If you have a dry, tickling cough, try cough drops or hard candy. NEVER give these to a child under age 3, because they can cause choking.
- Use a vaporizer or take a steamy shower. Both these things increase the moisture in the air and can help soothe a dry throat.
- Drink plenty of fluids. Liquids help thin the mucus in your throat and make it easier to cough it up.

NOTE: Some medical experts have recommended against using cough suppressants in many situations. Talk to your doctor before you or your child -- especially those under age 2 -- take any type of over-the-counter cough medicine, including those specifically labeled for children.

Medications available without a prescription include:

- Guaifensin helps break up mucus. Drink lots of fluids if you take this medicine.
- Decongestants help clear a runny nose and relieve postnasal drip. DO NOT give children under age 6 an over-the-counter decongestant unless specifically told to do so by your doctor. You should not take decongestants if you have high blood pressure.

Do not expect a doctor to prescribe antibiotics for viral infections like colds or flu. Antibiotics do not work on viruses. Antibiotics also will not help coughs from allergies.

## Call your health care provider if

Call 911 if you have:

- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Hives or swollen face or throat with difficulty swallowing

Call your doctor right away if you have:

- Violent cough that begins suddenly
- High-pitched sound (called stridor) when inhaling
- Cough that produces blood
- Fever (may indicate a bacterial infection requiring antibiotics)
- Thick, foul-smelling, yellowish-green phlegm (may indicate a bacterial infection)
- A history of heart disease, swelling in your legs, or a cough that worsens when you lie down (may indicate congestive heart failure)
- Exposure to someone with tuberculosis
- Unintentional weight loss or night sweats (may also indicate tuberculosis)
- Cough longer than 10-14 days
- Cough in an infant less than 3 months old

## What to expect at your health care provider's office

In emergency cases, the patient will be treated first to stabilize the condition. After the condition is stable, the doctor will ask questions about your cough, including:

- Are you coughing up blood? (How much, how often)
- Do you bring up any mucus/sputum when you cough? What does it look like? Is it thick and hard to cough up? How much sputum is produced per day?
- Is the cough severe? Is the cough dry?
- Does the cough sound like a seal barking?
- What is the pattern of the cough? Did it begin suddenly? Has it been increasing recently? Is the cough worse at night? When you first awaken?
- How long has the cough lasted?
- Is the cough worse when you are lying on one side?
- Are there sudden periodic attacks of coughing with gagging and vomiting?
- What other symptoms are present?

The physical examination will include emphasis on the ears, nose, throat and chest.

Diagnostic tests that may be performed include:

- Bronchoscopy
- Lung scan

- Pulmonary function tests
- Sputum analysis (if the cough produces sputum)
- X-ray of the chest

## Prevention

- Don't smoke and stay away from secondhand smoke.
- If you have seasonal allergies like hay fever, stay indoors during days when airborne allergens are high. If possible, keep the windows closed and use an air conditioner. Avoid fans that draw in air from outdoors. Shower and change your clothes after being outside.
- If you have allergies year round, cover your pillows and mattress with dust mite covers, use an air purifier, and avoid pets and other triggers.

## References

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