

# BRONCHITIS (Chronic)

## TO YOUR HEALTH - PATIENT EDUCATION HANDOUT

# 8.4

### DESCRIPTION

Chronic inflammation and degeneration of the bronchial tubes, with or without active infection. It is most commonly associated with cigarette smoking.

### FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Frequent cough or coughing spasms
- Shortness of breath
- Sputum that is thick and difficult to cough up. Sputum production varies according to whether infection is present

### CAUSES

Repeated irritation or infection in the bronchial tubes, causing them to thicken, narrow and lose elasticity. Underlying irritants include allergens, air pollution and tobacco smoke.

### RISK INCREASES WITH

- Smoking (the greatest risk factor)
- Any lung illness that has lowered resistance
- Family history of tuberculosis or other disease of the respiratory tract
- Exposure to air pollutants or cigarette smoke

### PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Don't smoke. This is the most reversible risk.
- Avoid irritating fumes in the environment.
- Obtain prompt medical treatment for respiratory infections
- Avoid second-hand smoke

### EXPECTED OUTCOME

Chronic bronchitis is usually curable with treatment if you are a non-smoker and don't have an underlying chronic disease, such as congestive heart failure, bronchiectasis or tuberculosis. Chronic bronchitis usually reduces life expectancy if you smoke and don't stop, or if you have an underlying chronic disease.

### POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Recurrent pneumonia. Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease

(COPD) which is incurable.

### GENERAL MEASURES

Many lung and heart disorders cause symptoms identical those of chronic bronchitis. Medical tests will be used to make a diagnosis. Treatment can relieve symptoms and help prevent complications. Stop smoking. If you work or live in an area with heavy air pollution, avoid exposure. Consider installing air-conditioning with a filter and humidity control in your home. Avoid sudden shouting, laughing loudly, crying and exertion, if these trigger coughing episodes. Your medical provider will provide instructions. Get an annual pneumococcal vaccine and an annual flu vaccine.

### MEDICATION

- Don't take cough suppressants; they make chronic bronchitis worse.
- Antibiotics to fight chronic or recurrent infection may be prescribed.
- Expectorants to loosen secretions.
- Bronchodilators to open bronchial tubes.
- Other medications may also be prescribed.

### ACTIVITY & DIET

No restrictions. A regular exercise routine is important. No special diet. Increase fluid intake to 8 to 10 glasses a day to keep lung secretions thin.

### NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF...

- Fever or vomiting occurs
- Blood appears in the sputum
- Chest pain increases
- Shortness of breath occurs even when you are resting or not coughing
- Sputum thickens despite efforts to thin it

Student Health Center



[WWW.SIU.EDU/~SHC](http://WWW.SIU.EDU/~SHC)

This information is for educational purposes only. Consult your doctor for specific medical advice, diagnosis and treatment.

618-453-3311

Dial-A-Nurse is available after-hours until 10:30 p.m. during fall and spring semesters. In case of emergency dial 911.