

# Natural Help 4...

# Acute Bronchitis



## What is Bronchitis?

**Bronchitis** is an **inflammation of the bronchi (large airways) in the lungs**, occurring when an infection causes the thin mucous membrane linings of these airways to become irritated and inflamed. The result is the production of mucus in the lungs and a persistent cough that may last several days or weeks.

## The Two Types of Bronchitis

**Chronic bronchitis:** This is not necessarily caused by infection and is most often part of more serious lung conditions. The most common **chronic bronchitis** symptoms are characterized by a persistent cough that produces phlegm for at least three months a year for two consecutive years.

**Acute bronchitis** is recognized as a cough and the production of phlegm which may be accompanied by symptoms such as shortness of breath and wheezing, as well as a mild fever in some cases. **Acute bronchitis** commonly occurs after an upper respiratory infection such as a cold, influenza, or a sinus infection. For this reason, you may also experience other symptoms such as muscle aches, nasal congestion, and a sore throat in addition to **bronchitis symptoms**.

## Diagnosing Bronchitis

**Bronchitis** generally clears up on its own after a few weeks, although sometimes the **cough may be especially disruptive** or complications may prompt you to seek medical attention. In addition, treatment differs for **chronic bronchitis** and **acute bronchitis**, so the correct diagnosis can offer the most relief by addressing any underlying infections. Generally if symptoms persist or you are worried about their severity, it's a good idea to seek medical attention.

## Reasons to Seek Medical Attention for Bronchitis

- A severe cough that persistently disrupts sleep
- Severe wheezing that makes it difficult to breathe
- Worsening cough symptoms after a week
- Blood-tinged phlegm
- A mild fever that lasts longer than three days, or a fever over 101°F
- Repeated bouts of **bronchitis**
- You have a chronic lung or heart condition, as this increases your chance of developing complications

Your doctor will be able to diagnose **bronchitis** by listening to your chest with a

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stethoscope. You may also be asked to have a chest X-ray, and in some cases a sputum culture (laboratory test to determine the presence of bacteria in the phlegm) may be done, especially if a more serious condition such as pneumonia or tuberculosis is suspected.

## What Causes Bronchitis?

**Bronchitis** is generally caused by a virus such as those that cause the common cold and influenza. It is therefore common to develop **bronchitis** as a secondary infection which follows flu-like symptoms, or is accompanied by them.

There are, however, other causes of **bronchitis** including certain bacterial infections as well as environmental irritants such as cigarette smoke, pollution, dust, and chemical fumes. The avoidance of smoking can act as a natural cure for bronchitis, as prevention can be the greatest deterrent for illness.

**Some people are also more at risk of developing bronchitis** such as the elderly, people with a lowered immune system, those who are continuously exposed to lung irritants (such as smoke), and people working in certain occupational settings.

## Help for Bronchitis

Most cases of **Bronchitis** resolve without medical treatment provided that there are no complications, although it may take some time before the cough disappears completely.

## Treatments for Bronchitis

### Self-Care Treatment

**Natural cures for bronchitis** include focusing some attention to maintaining personal health. What your body needs most when trying to fight off any infection is **plenty of rest and water**. You can also try an over-the-counter cough medicine that helps to loosen the cough. While this may make you cough more, it will help to clear the infection sooner. **It is important not to suppress the cough**, as this can cause further infection by drying out the mucous membranes. Thus, cough suppressants are generally only recommended at night to help to you get some rest if the cough is interfering with sleep. In addition, you can try using a humidifier to soothe the cough, and avoid lung irritants (such as cigarette smoke). If you are a smoker – it is essential that you stop smoking naturally.

### Medical Treatment

**Antibiotics are not usually prescribed for bronchitis** as the most common causes are viral infections. However, if your doctor suspects a bacterial infection, or if you are at high risk for developing complications (such as those people with a lung disease or asthma) antibiotics may be recommended as a precautionary measure. Remember, that as antibiotics rob your system of 'good' bacteria – it is important to take probiotics, such as live culture yogurt, after a course of antibiotics.

### Natural Herbal and Homeopathic Remedies

Herbal and homeopathic remedies have been used for centuries to treat a number



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### Michele Carelse, Clinical Psychologist



All of our natural remedies are formulated by our expert team of herbalists, naturopaths and homeopaths, and headed by Michele Carelse.

Michele has had years of experience in the manufacturing and use of natural remedies. In addition, she is a trained Clinical Psychologist and has been incorporating natural remedies into her treatment of patients with depression, anxiety, ADD, ADHD and stress for many years with spectacular results.

of conditions, and so it is not surprising to find that natural cures or supplements to alleviate [bronchitis symptoms](#) have been supplied by nature. Herbs such as Althea Officinalis (Marshmallow), Hyssopus Officinalis (Hyssop), and Sambucus Nigra (Elder) have long been used for their soothing effect on inflamed and irritated mucous membranes, while **promoting respiratory health and vitality**.

There are also a few tissue salts known for their tonic effect on the overall respiratory system such as Bryonia (30C) and Kali. Mur. (6C.) While these ingredients help relieve troubling [bronchitis symptoms](#), other remedies are especially helpful in assisting with **speedy recovery and boosting the immune system** to help your body fight off infection.

Herbs such as Echinacea purpurea, Astragalus membranaceus, Inula helenium and Withania somnifera are commonly used for their antiviral, antifungal, and antibacterial properties, as well as their ability to support the immune system. These herbs work as a tonic for the immune system and are often **recommended to prevent and assist recovery from illness or infection**.

## The Natural Approach

While Western medicine has become the norm in many cultures, it is not the only treatment option. Conventional western medicine, often called allopathic medicine, is the system of medicine taught at most medical schools and most pharmaceutical and synthetic medicines are manufactured and marketed according to the principles of allopathic medicine. Allopathic medicine is also sometimes called orthodox medicine.

Because most of us in the Western world have grown up in a society in which allopathic medicine is the prevailing norm, we forget that, only a few decades ago, homeopathic, herbal and other natural medicines were commonly available – and freely used even by conventional doctors. While there are often heated debates about which system of medicine is ‘better’ than the other, many responsible doctors (whether they are allopathic or not) recognize that both have a role to play in the treatment program.

Natural medicine has often been frowned on by conventional doctors, especially by those who did not have sufficient knowledge of these medicines. However, it is encouraging to note that some medical schools are now beginning to re-introduce it into their course work, thereby providing doctors with a wider range of treatment options from which to choose. In many countries, especially in Europe, India and China, natural and homeopathic medicines are commonly prescribed by conventional doctors and represent a significant part of the total annual drug sales.

Naturopathy is a branch of medicine (just as allopathy is a branch of medicine) which operates according to the underlying philosophy that the body has an innate capacity to heal itself. While natural medicines are often called ‘alternative’ or ‘complimentary’ medicines, they are, in fact, a unique and independent form of medicine in their own right, well able to treat a variety of conditions. Perhaps the term ‘holistic’ medicine is more apt, given the broad range of treatment options and approaches which are to be found within the practice of natural medicine, which encompasses many different disciplines, including herbalism, homeopathy, iridology, osteopathy, chiropractic, therapeutic massage techniques, aromatherapy, acupuncture and many, many more.

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Most naturopaths will use a variety of treatment modalities in order to treat their patients in a holistic way to support health, relieve symptoms and prevent future disease. In fact, even the World Health Organization defines health as being "... more than simply the absence of illness. It is the active state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being." This is a wonderfully clear description of holistic or natural medicine, which strives to support health (thereby relieving or preventing symptoms), rather than simply eliminating disease.

Although allopathic medicine certainly has a role to play and has made a tremendous contribution to medical science during the past century, there is a growing perception that it is not the only answer and that, in many cases, holistic medicine can accomplish just as much, if not more – without the risk of side effects, addiction and sacrifice to health so commonly associated with pharmaceutical drugs. Contrary to common perception, and provided that they are manufactured in the correct way, natural medicines can work quickly and safely to promote healing.

In many cases, they can succeed where pharmaceutical drugs have failed. Despite frequent reports that they are ‘unproven’ and ‘untested’, the opposite is true. Natural medicines have a long history of usage and there is a wealth of empirical evidence to support their effectiveness and safety. In addition, active clinical research is carried out by many academic hospitals and universities to support the extensive traditional and empirical evidence behind natural medicines.

It is also important to know that, like any medicine, herbal and homeopathic medicines must be manufactured in the correct way, following acceptable procedures and manufacturing methods to ensure maximum effectiveness and safety. Due to the recent rise in popularity of natural remedies, many companies have sprung up to take advantage of the market. Unfortunately not all of them are equipped to manufacture to the correct standards, often resulting in a flood of inferior (and sometimes even unsafe) remedies onto the market – and giving natural remedies a bad name.

Even some pharmaceutical companies have rushed to claim their market share by producing so-called ‘standardized’ extracts of herbs and offering these as superior to the tried and tested methods of naturopathic manufacturing. Nothing could be further from the truth. While ‘standardized’ extracts may offer benefit of easy consistency of dosage (and cheaper more efficient production lines), they have grave disadvantages. These include an increase in side effects as the medicines produced in this manner lose the natural protective properties of the herbs. In some cases, these side effects have proved fatal – as was seen in the liver toxicity associated with standardized extracts of kava kava, a herb previously safely used for generations without any known side effects.

Most naturopaths recommend what is called the Full Spectrum Method of extraction – which retains the benefits of ALL the active ingredients within the herb as opposed to isolating only one – thereby providing a more complete treatment as well as superior protection against side effects.

Whatever your choice, always choose wisely. Research what is best for you. If you have a chronic or life threatening condition, don’t make changes without first discussing them with your doctor in order that your condition may be monitored. Well informed and supportive practitioners will support patients who want to take responsibility for their own health.



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