



# BRONCHIECTASIS



## BASIC INFORMATION

### DESCRIPTION

A rare lung disease, in which the bronchial tubes become enlarged and distended (stretched). Pockets form where infections may develop. Bronchiectasis can affect all age groups.

### FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Frequent coughing. There may be foul-smelling mucus. The mucus may be green or yellow. Sometimes the mucus is flecked with blood.
- Chest pain and wheezing.
- Repeated lung infections.
- Shortness of breath.
- Feeling tired and weak.
- Weight loss.

### CAUSES

The bronchial walls become damaged and weak, usually as a result of infections. This damage may develop over years. The cilia (small hairs) that help keep the bronchial tubes clean are destroyed. This allows dust, bacteria, and mucus to accumulate.

### RISK INCREASES WITH

- Repeated lung infections such as pneumonia.
- Chronic bronchitis.
- Inhaling a foreign object (such as a peanut).
- Tuberculosis, lung cancer, or lung abscess.
- Cystic fibrosis.
- Family history of lung disease.
- Cigarette smoking.
- Weak immune system due to illness or drugs.

### PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- None specific. Avoid risk factors where possible:

Don't smoke.

Obtain medical care for lung infections.

Prompt removal of any foreign body that has entered the lungs.

Get vaccines for flu and pneumonia.

## EXPECTED OUTCOMES

With treatment, many patients can lead nearly normal lives without major problems.

## POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.
- Repeated pneumonia or other infections.
- Cor pulmonale (heart disorder due to lung disease).
- Hospital care and breathing support may be needed for complications.



## DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

### GENERAL MEASURES

- Your health care provider will do a physical exam and ask questions about your symptoms. Medical tests may include blood or sputum (material coughed up from the lungs) tests, CT, X-ray, bronchoscopy (looking in the airways with a lighted tube), and pulmonary function tests.
- Treatment includes postural drainage to remove lung secretions, drugs (as needed), treatment for underlying disorder (such as cystic fibrosis), and lifestyle changes.
- Postural drainage involves ridding the lungs of the secretions. You will be taught the proper technique. It is usually done by lying on a bed and hanging your head over the side with the affected lung uppermost. Clapping the chest can help mucus drain. A family member can do this by hand or a mechanical device can be used. This routine is done 1 to 3 times a day.
- Quit smoking. Find a way to stop that works for you.
- Surgery to remove areas of damaged lung tissue may be recommended if other treatments are not effective.
- To learn more: American Lung Association, 61 Broadway, 6th Floor, New York, NY 10006, (800) 586-4872; website: [www.lungusa.org](http://www.lungusa.org).

### MEDICATIONS

Your health care provider may prescribe:

- Antibiotic drugs for infections.
- Inhaled beta-agonists to assist breathing.
- Drugs, such as guaifenesin, to loosen mucus in the lungs.
- Drugs to treat any underlying disorder.

### ACTIVITY

Remain as active as possible.

### DIET

Drink at least eight glasses of fluid a day.



## NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of bronchiectasis.

- Symptoms of lung infection develop or fever occurs.
- Sputum contains blood, changes color, or thickens.
- Chest pain increases or you become short of breath.

