



BRONCHITIS, CHRONIC



BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

Inflammation (swelling) of the mucous lining of the bronchii (main air passages) to the lungs. It often occurs along with emphysema (damaged air sacs in the lungs). Chronic bronchitis usually affects adults over age 45 and women more than men.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Symptoms don't start suddenly. They develop over time. They include the presence of a mucus-producing cough most days of the month, 3 months of the year for 2 consecutive years.

CAUSES

Repeated irritation or infection in the bronchial tubes. The tubes begin to thicken and become more narrow. They begin to lose their elasticity. The main cause is smoking.

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Smoking.
- History of lung disorders.
- Family history of lung disease.
- Exposure to air pollutants.
- Work that involves exposure to high levels of dust and irritating fumes.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Don't smoke. This is the best prevention.
- Avoid fumes in the environment.
- Get prompt medical care for lung infections.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

There is no cure for this disorder. Treatment can help relieve the symptoms and slow the progress of the disease. Smokers must stop smoking.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Heart disease.
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).
- Cor Pulmonale (heart disorder).



DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- Your health care provider will do a physical exam and ask questions about your symptoms, smoking habits, and exposure to pollutants or irritants. Many lung and heart disorders cause symptoms identical to those of chronic bronchitis. Medical tests will be used to make a diagnosis.
- Treatment can help relieve symptoms and help prevent complications. A treatment plan will be developed based on your individual needs.
- Stop smoking. Find a way to quit that works for you.
- Avoid areas with air pollution, dust, or fumes. Consider changing jobs if you need to.
- Install air-conditioning with a filter and humidity control in your home.
- Avoid shouting, laughing loudly, and crying if these make you cough.
- Get a pneumococcal vaccine and annual flu vaccine.
- Your health care provider can teach you exercises to help improve your breathing.
- Lung transplantation may be recommended for advanced cases.
- To learn more: American Lung Association, 61 Broadway, 6th Floor, New York, NY 10006, (800) 586-4872; website: www.lungusa.org.

MEDICATIONS

- Don't take drugs to lessen your cough. They can make this condition worse.
- Antibiotics for infection may be prescribed.
- Oral or inhaled bronchodilator drugs may be prescribed to relax and open the airways in the lungs.
- Oral or inhaled steroids may be prescribed to reduce inflammation.
- Drugs to thin the mucous may be prescribed.

ACTIVITY

- Regular exercise is important. Long periods of being inactive can add to your disability.
- Avoid sudden temperature changes. Avoid cold, wet weather.
- Be careful when exercising or working. Work at a pace that does not make you cough.

DIET

No special diet. Drink 8 to 10 glasses of liquid a day. This can help thin the mucus produced by your lungs.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of chronic bronchitis.
- You have a fever or vomiting.
- Mucus gets thicker or has blood in it.
- Your chest pain gets worse.
- You feel short of breath even when you are resting or not coughing.

