

BRONCHITIS

Bronchitis is an infection of the large airway passages to the lungs, the trachea and bronchi. The illness does not involve the lungs or its smaller structures, the alveoli or supporting lung tissue. A virus or bacteria can cause bronchitis. If a virus causes bronchitis then the illness usually "runs its course" (i.e., no medicine required). Presently, there is no medicine available that will kill a virus. If a bacteria causes bronchitis then the illness usually is treated with an antibiotic to eliminate the infection.

Symptoms of Bronchitis

A cough is usually present. The cough can be dry (without mucus being produced) or wet (with mucus being produced). The mucus can be clear, white, yellow or green and can be of varying amounts. Frequent coughing may cause pain in the middle of the chest or sore muscles. Difficulty breathing in or out may be present as well as wheezing, whistling sounds. You may also experience fever.

Caring For Yourself

- Get plenty of rest
- Drink lots of fluids-two quarts a day or eight 8-ounce glasses
- Use a vaporizer or humidifier to ease your breathing
- Use a cough syrup such as Robitussin DM
- Take your antibiotic, if prescribed
- Do not smoke; avoid exposure to secondhand smoke
- Take aspirin or Tylenol, 2 tablets every 3-4 hours for fever

Possible Complications

Bronchitis may last for days or weeks depending upon the cause and the severity of the infection. Even after the infection is gone a cough may linger. There are usually no serious complications. However, if you have difficulty breathing, have increased fever, have chest pain, or don't start to improve after 72 hours, contact your health care provider.

Remember to visit the Student Health Pharmacy for over-the-counter products!