



What is Bronchitis?

Bronchitis is the inflammation or swelling of the bronchial tubes, the air passages between the nose and lungs. People with bronchitis have a reduced ability to breathe oxygen into their lungs; they also have heavy mucus or phlegm forming in their airways. Viruses, bacteria and other irritant particles usually cause this kind of inflammation of the bronchial tubes. An acute case of bronchitis is short-term and often follows a cold or viral infection, however chronic bronchitis is long-term and can be the result of environmental factors such as pollution, cigarette smoke and other chemicals.

What types of Bronchitis are there?

Bronchitis may be acute or chronic. Acute bronchitis is a shorter illness that commonly follows a cold or viral infection, such as the flu. It consists of a cough with mucus, chest discomfort or soreness, fever and sometimes shortness of breath. Acute bronchitis usually lasts a few days or weeks. Chronic bronchitis is a serious, ongoing illness characterized by a persistent, mucus-producing cough that lasts longer than three months. People with chronic bronchitis have varying degrees of breathing difficulties and symptoms may get better and worse during different parts of the year.

What causes Bronchitis?

Acute bronchitis is normally caused by viruses, typically those that also cause colds and flu. It can also be caused by bacterial infection and exposure to substances that irritate the lungs, such as tobacco smoke, dust, fumes, vapors, and air pollution. Chronic bronchitis is caused by repeated irritation and damage of the lung and airway tissue. Smoking is the most common causes of chronic bronchitis, with other causes including long-term exposure to air pollution, dust and fumes from the environment, and repeated episodes of acute bronchitis.

Signs and symptoms of Bronchitis

Bronchitis shares many symptoms with the common cold, such as

- Persistent cough, which may produce mucus
- Wheezing
- Low fever and chills
- Chest tightening
- Sore throat
- Body aches
- Breathlessness
- Headaches
- Blocked nose and sinuses

Treatment and Prevention of Bronchitis

While there is no cure for bronchitis, there are many ways to reduce the risk of developing bronchitis in addition to effective medicines to treat symptoms. Some acute bronchitis may even go away without any direct treatment.

Other treatment options include:

- Antibiotics – these are effective for bacterial infections, but not for viral infections. They may also prevent secondary infections
- Cough medicine – although coughing should not be completely suppressed as this is an important way to bring up mucus and remove irritants from the lungs
- Bronchodilators – typically an inhaler, these open the bronchial tubes and clear out mucus
- Mucolytic – these thin or loosen mucus in the airways, making it easier to cough up sputum
- Anti-inflammatory medicines and glucocorticoid steroid – these are for more persistent symptoms to help decrease chronic inflammation that may cause tissue damage
- Oxygen therapy or Nebulizer treatment –this helps improve oxygen intake when breathing is difficult

Symptoms can be managed at home by resting, drinking fluids and treating pains with acetaminophen and ibuprofen (although ibuprofen should not be used if you are asthmatic).

Treatment and Prevention of Bronchitis

If you are suffering from any of these symptoms, come visit us at MainStreet Family Urgent Care today! We have our state-of-the-art digital x-ray, lung function tests and blood tests available to help diagnose you. Open seven days a week, we can help you heal better and feel better, FAST!

If you think you are suffering from Bronchitis,

stop by MainStreet Family Urgent Care!

Open 7 days a week and no appointment necessary!