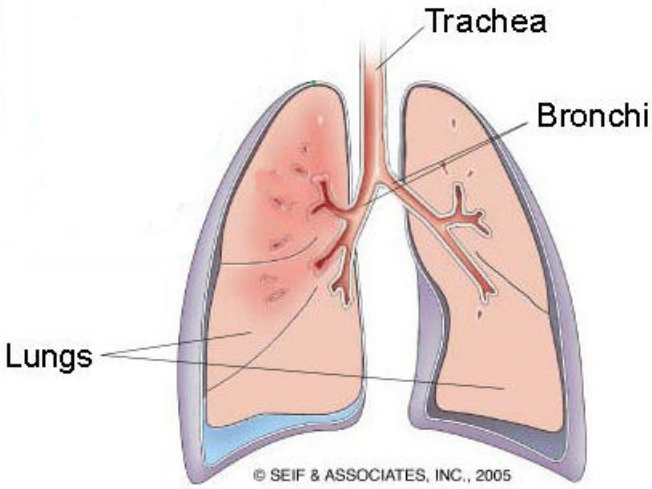
Acute Bronchitis

You have acute bronchitis. This means you have a chest cold. The airways in your lungs are *inflamed* (red and sore). Acute means it is sudden onset. Bronchitis is most often caused by a virus. In smokers, people with chronic lung problems, and elderly patients, treatment with antibiotics for bacterial infection may be needed. Exposure to cigarette smoke or irritating chemicals will make bronchitis worse. Allergies and asthma can also make bronchitis worse. Repeated episodes of bronchitis may cause long standing lung problems.



Acute bronchitis is usually treated with rest, fluids, and medicines for relief of fever or cough. Bronchodilator medicines from metered inhalers or a nebulizer may be used to help open up the small airways. This reduces shortness of breath and helps control cough. Antibiotics can be prescribed if you are more seriously ill or at risk. A cool air vaporizer may help thin bronchial secretions and make it easier to clear your chest. Increased fluids may also help. **You must avoid smoking, even second hand exposure.** If you are a cigarette smoker, consider using nicotine gum or skin patches to help control withdrawal symptoms.

Recovery from bronchitis is often slow, but you should start feeling better after 2-3 days. Cough from bronchitis frequently lasts for 3-4 weeks.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF YOU DEVELOP:

- Increased fever, chills, or chest pain.
- Severe shortness of breath or bloody sputum.
- Dehydration, fainting, repeated vomiting, severe headache.
- No improvement after one week of proper treatment.

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

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