Cough, Bacterial

You have been seen today for a cough. Your caregiver feels that your cough is caused by germs (*bacteria*). Often, infections of the lungs are caused by bacteria. Usually, these infections are caused by inhaling bacteria into your throat and lungs.

SYMPTOMS

The most common symptoms are cough, fever, chest pain, increased breathing rate, wheezing, and colored secretions you cough up (*sputum*). These infections are diagnosed by your caregiver physically examining you.

DIAGNOSIS

These infections are diagnosed by your caregiver physically examining you. Other times the diagnosis may require chest X-rays, blood analysis, and/or cultures. The bacterial pneumonias are usually cleared up with medications which kill germs (*antibiotics*).

The following information may or may not apply to you. It is possible that some of your lab work or X-rays may needed to make a final diagnosis. Sometimes some of these tests require repeating.

- X-rays may have been taken today and will be read again by a radiologist. The official reading will be back in 1 to 2 days.
- Lab work may have been done today and should be back within 24 hours. Call in 1 day for your lab results or as directed.
- Cultures may have been done today. These generally take at least 2 days for results. Call in 2 to 3 days for your results or as directed.
- You may have had special procedures done today and the results will not be available for a few days. Call for your results or as directed.

Not all test results are available during your visit. If your test results are not back during the visit, make an appointment with your caregiver to find out the results. Do not assume everything is normal if you have not heard from your caregiver or the medical facility. It is important for you to follow up on all of your test results.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Cough suppressants may be used as directed by your caregiver. Keep in mind that coughing helps clear mucus and infection out of the respiratory tract. It is best to only use cough suppressants to allow your child to rest. For children under the age of 4 years, use cough suppressants **only** as directed by your child's caregiver.
- Your caregiver usually prescribes an antibiotic if they feel your cough is caused by a bacterial infection. Take all your antibiotics as directed until they are gone, even if you feel better in a couple of days.
- Your caregiver may also prescribe an expectorant to loosen the mucous (*sputum*).
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver.
- Do not use aspirin with children because of the association with Reye's Syndrome. The cough could be caused by a flu bug (*virus*).
- Smoking is a common cause of bronchitis and can contribute to pneumonia. **Stopping this habit is important.**

- A cold steam vaporizer or humidifier in your room may help loosen secretions.
- Cough is often worse at night. Sleeping in a semi-upright position or using a couple pillows under your head and shoulders will help with this.
- Get rest as you feel it is needed. Your body will help guide you in this manner.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You develop pus-like or colored (*purulent*) sputum, have an uncontrolled fever, or become more ill. This is especially true if you are elderly or weakened from any other disease.
- You can not control your cough with suppressants and are losing sleep.
- You begin coughing up blood.
- You develop chest pain that is getting worse or is uncontrolled with medicines.
- Anytime it becomes difficult to breathe (shortness of breath).
- You develop an oral temperature above 102º F (38.9º C), after not having a temperature for one or more days.
- If any of the symptoms that first brought you in for care are getting worse rather than better.

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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