

COUGH ADVICE

CAUSES

A person can have a very long lasting **post-viral cough** (and virtually all upper respiratory infections are viral). It can last for eight weeks! See <http://bit.ly/mN7PQu> for more information about this phenomenon.

Sometimes a person with a viral infection or an allergy has **post-nasal drip** and drainage into the throat, which can cause coughing. A decongestant or antihistamine might help.

Some people also get a "**reactive airway**" provoked by a virus or allergy as well, with asthma-like wheezing and breathlessness, in which case an albuterol inhaler can help.

Adults can get **pertussis**, too (whooping cough), which we often call the "90-day cough." This involves frequent "coughing fits" that can often result in gagging, vomiting, and choking, breathless symptoms. Please see my handout at <http://bit.ly/bk2TZZ> for more information on this.

You may have a concern about **pneumonia** (lung infection, usually bacterial).

Warning signs are: sudden onset of fever (103F+), shaking chills, and stabbing chest pain with deep breathing (as well as cough).

If you have these, I would recommend a chest x-ray, blood test, and antibiotics. Come to my office for a physical exam!

If you have sudden stabbing severe chest pain with rapidly-worsening trouble breathing, please call 911 or go directly to an emergency room. These are signs of **lung collapse or blood clot** in lung, which could be life-threatening.

Very often people with a persistent cough can get pretty bad **rib pain** that feels like stabbing chest pain (without fever or obstructed breathing). A massage therapist, osteopath, or chiropractor can often replace the displaced rib and solve the problem.

Here is a demonstration (45-sec video): <http://bit.ly/ir81M4>

...I have never been trained in how to do it (yet!).

Acid reflux from the stomach can also produce a nagging cough, which is usually worse on an empty stomach, or when lying down. Taking Tums (gently neutralizes acid, while providing a calcium supplement) can help.

TREATMENTS

If your major symptom is this nagging cough (and exhaustion from coughing), it is likely you will just be obliged to do your best to support your immune system and allow it to recover.

Here are some natural therapies:

- Hot herbal tea with honey in it, 4-6 times per day. (Some helpful herbs include coltsfoot plant, licorice root, elecampane root, horehound plant, wild cherry bark. Please note that licorice root can raise the blood pressure, so use on short-term basis with normal blood pressure only.)
- Steam treatment, 3-4 times per day. (Lean over a pot of boiled water with a towel over your head to make a "steam tent." Add a couple of peppermint tea bags, for a menthol decongestant effect. Be careful not to burn yourself!)
- Spicy chicken or miso soup (add pepper and garlic).
- Nasal rinses in a hot shower (for example, using a "Neti pot") help remove allergens that cause mucus drainage.
- Sleep! You will need extra rest while your body recovers! Please let me know if you need an excuse for school or work.

Medications:

- Guaifenesin is an expectorant that thins the mucus in the airway, so that you clear the cough faster. It can be taken as a pill or a syrup, and is available over the counter (generic, or brand-name "Mucinex").
- Pseudoephedrine is a decongestant that dries up secretions. It is available by prescription.
- Benzonatate (Tessalon) is similar to a topical anesthetic, and is one of the most effective prescription cough medicines we have.
- If you are having asthma-like wheezing and breathlessness, an albuterol inhaler can help. A small-sized inhaler is available for only \$9, by prescription.

CAUTION

If you are having warning signs of pneumonia (sudden onset of fever >103F, shaking chills, and stabbing chest pain with deep breathing), please call or text my cell phone!