

Coughs/Bronchitis

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Saturday, 15 August 2009
Last Updated Saturday, 15 August 2009

COUGH

That nagging cough may be due to a common cold or a number of other infections.

According to research or other evidence, the following self-care steps may help you stop the coughing and care for your lungs:

Try traditional herbs. Relieve coughing with herbal remedies containing marshmallow, elecampagne, thyme, coltsfoot, or slippery elm

About cough

A cough is a symptom of many diseases. Most coughs come from simple viral infections, such as the common cold. Sometimes, but not always, mucus is produced with the cough. If the colour is green or yellow, it may be a hint of a bacterial infection although this is not always a reliable indicator. If the colour is red, there may be bleeding in the lungs. Any cough that produces blood or blood-stained mucus, as well as any cough that lasts more than two weeks, requires a visit to a medical professional for diagnosis.

Dietary changes that may be helpful

Dietary factors may influence both inflammatory activity and antioxidant status in the body. Increased inflammation and decreased antioxidant activity may each lead to an increased incidence of chronic diseases, such as chronic bronchitis.

People suffering from chronic bronchitis may experience an improvement in symptoms when consuming a diet high in anti-inflammatory fatty acids, such as those found in fish. In a double-blind study of children with recurrent respiratory tract infections, a daily essential-fatty-acid supplement (containing 855 mg of alpha-linolenic acid and 596 mg of linoleic acid) reduced both the number and the duration of recurrences.

In people with bronchitis, lipids in the lung tissue may undergo oxidation damage (also called free radical damage), particularly when the bronchitis is a result of exposure to environmental toxins or cigarette smoke. A diet high in antioxidants may protect against the free radical-damaging effect of these toxins. Studies comparing different populations have shown that increasing fruit and vegetable (and therefore, antioxidant) consumption may reduce the risk of developing chronic bronchitis.

Food and environmental allergies may be triggering factors in some cases of chronic bronchitis. Cows milk allergy has been associated with bronchitis in children, and some believe that dairy products may increase mucus production and, therefore, people suffering from either acute or chronic bronchitis should limit their intake of dairy products. Ingestion of simple sugars (such as sucrose or fructose) can lead to suppression of immune function therefore, simple sugars should be avoided during illness.

Lifestyle changes that may be helpful

Breast-feeding provides important nutrients to an infant and improves the functioning of the immune system.

Studies have shown that breast-feeding prevents the development of lower respiratory tract infections during infancy.

Whether that protective effect persists into adulthood is not known. Exposure to environmental chemicals, including passive smoke, can increase the incidence of respiratory illness among children.

BRONCHITIS

Chronic bronchitis is frequently associated with smoking and/or environmental exposure to chemicals or allergens.

These exposures should be avoided to allow the cells of the bronchi to recover from chronic irritation and to decrease the burden on the immune system.

Rest and increased fluid intake are recommended in the fever stage of acute bronchitis. Treatment of chronic bronchitis includes ceasing smoking. Honey, lemon and root ginger drinks can help.

The common cold may lead to bronchitis in susceptible people, and studies have shown that vitamin C supplements can decrease the severity and duration of the common cold in otherwise healthy people.¹

Herbs that may be helpful

Several types of herbs may help people with bronchitis, either by treating underlying infection by relieving inflammation, or by relieving symptoms such as cough. For clarity, the table below summarizes which herbs are in each category of action.

Some herbs have more than one action.

- Expectorant: Anise, Marrubium, Verbascum, Pleurisy Root.
- Anti- Inflammatory: Inula , Althea , Verbascum, Slippery Elm.
- Fights Infection : Echinacea, lavandula, eucalyptus, thymus.
- Antitussive: Lobelia, Althea, Tussilago.
- Relieves spasmodic cough : Lobelia, Thymus, Tussilago.

Expectorant herbs help loosen bronchial secretions and make elimination of mucus easier. Numerous herbs are traditionally considered expectorants.

Anise contains a volatile oil that is high in the chemical constituent anethole and acts as an expectorant.

Marrubium has expectorant properties, possibly due to the presence of a diterpene lactone in the plant, which is known as marrubiin.

Verbascum has been used traditionally as a remedy for the respiratory tract, including bronchitis. The saponins in it may be responsible for its expectorant actions.

Tussilago is a quite a popular herbal remedy in modern Europe and Asia which is used to suppress cough, relieve sore throat and other symptoms of bronchitis. The leaves and blossoms of this plant are used for various herbal teas, tinctures, syrups and infusions. Therefore, those people, who frequently suffer from colds, throat irritations, chronic coughs and other related problems.

Pleurisy Root is an expectorant and is thought to be helpful against all types of respiratory infections. It is traditionally employed as an expectorant for bronchitis. However, owing to the cardiac glycosides it contains, pleurisy root may not be safe to use if one is taking heart medications. This herb should NOT be used by pregnant women.

Anti-inflammatory herbs may help people with bronchitis. Often these herbs contain complex polysaccharides and have a soothing effect; they are also known as demulcents.

Plantago is a demulcent that has been used to help people with chronic bronchitis.

Other demulcents traditionally used for people with bronchitis include Verbascum, Althea and slippery elm (Ulmus

fulva)

Because demulcents can provoke production of more mucus in the lungs, they tend to be used more often in people with dry coughs.

Elecampagne is a demulcent that has been used to treat coughs associated with bronchitis, asthma and whooping cough.

Antimicrobial and immune stimulating herbs may also potentially benefit people with bronchitis. Echinacea is widely used by herbalists for people with acute respiratory infections. This herb stimulates the immune system in several different ways, including enhancing macrophage function and increasing T-cell response. Therefore, echinacea may be useful for preventing a cold, flu, or viral bronchitis from progressing to a secondary bacterial infection.

Thymus contains an essential oil (thymol) and certain flavonoids. This plant has antispasmodic, expectorant, and antibacterial actions, and it is considered helpful in cases of bronchitis. A mixture containing volatile oils of thyme, mint, clove, cinnamon and lavender diluted in grape seed oil, and inhaled in water reduced the number of recurrent infections in people with chronic bronchitis.

Eucalyptus leaf tea is used to treat bronchitis and inflammation of the throat, and is considered antimicrobial. In traditional herbal medicine, eucalyptus tea used internally as well as the volatile oil used externally over the chest.

Lobelia contains many active alkaloids, of which lobeline is considered the most active. Very small amounts of this herb are considered helpful as an antispasmodic and antitussive agent (a substance that helps suppress or ease coughs). Use Only with the advice of a trained Medical herbalist.

Anti-inflammatory properties of the herb have been demonstrated, which may be useful, since bronchitis is associated with inflammation in the bronchi. Lobelia should be used cautiously, by trained herbaslists as it may cause nausea and vomiting in the wrong dosage and is a schedule 3 herb.