



## Chest Infections

We are very blessed to have a nurse practitioner volunteering for us and I asked her what she thought I should write about this month. She said that she is seeing a lot of patients with chest infections at the moment and suggested I give you some advice about them.

Chest infections are an infection of the lungs – some are mild and clear up by themselves, whereas others are severe and can be life threatening. So how can you tell the difference and what should you do?

Symptoms of a chest infection are a chesty cough where you might be bringing up green or yellow mucus, wheezing and shortness of breath. You can have chest pain or discomfort and a temperature of 38C or above. You can also have a headache, aching muscles and tiredness. While having a chest infection is unpleasant, people usually get better by themselves in around 7-10 days although the cough and mucus can last up to 3 weeks.

What can you do to help yourself?

- Rest
- Drink lots of water
- Inhale steam from a bowl of hot water
- Elevate your head with extra pillows when you sleep
- Use paracetamol for fevers and muscle pain
- Drink a hot lemon and honey drink to help with your sore throat
- Visit your pharmacist to talk about decongestants which might help loosen the mucus in your lungs

What NOT to do:

- Do not let children breathe in steam from a bowl of hot water due to risk of scalding
- Do not give aspirin to children under 16 years old
- Do not take cough medicine – there is little evidence to show they help
- Do not smoke – it can make your symptoms worse

When to see a GP:

- If you feel unwell or your symptoms get worse
- You cough up blood or blood-stained mucus
- You've had a cough for more than 3 weeks
- You are pregnant
- You are over 65
- Your immune system is weak
- You have a long-term health condition such as a problem with your heart, lungs or kidneys.

You may have pneumonia if your symptoms are severe.

What will the GP do?

This will depend on the likely cause of the chest infection

- A **virus** like viral bronchitis or the flu usually clear up by itself within a few weeks and antibiotics will not help
- **Bacteria** like pneumonia your GP may prescribe antibiotics – if you are given antibiotics

then you must complete the whole course even if you feel better.

Blessings,

Caroline, your Parish Nurse

(Information taken from NHS choices)

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