

ACUTE BRONCHITIS

Acute bronchitis is a CLINICAL DIAGNOSIS characterized by acute cough, with or without sputum production in the absence of signs indicating pneumonia or chronic lung disease.¹

ETIOLOGY

- ◆ Over 90% of cases of acute bronchitis are due to viral pathogens.¹
- ◆ Mycoplasma pneumonia, Chlamydophila pneumonia and Bordetella pertussis are rare causes of acute bronchitis
- ◆ Testing for influenza and pertussis should be considered when clinical suspicion is high and treatment would impact outcomes.

Patient with acute bronchitis will experience a cough for 18 days on average.²

When to suspect Pertussis

- ◆ Initial presentation (1st week) may be indistinguishable from a viral URI
- ◆ Recent contact with confirmed case of pertussis
- ◆ Paroxysmal (multiple coughs in a single breath) cough with post-tussive emesis or syncope
- ◆ Prolonged coughing greater than 2-3 weeks (the cough of pertussis lasts 3 months)

Productive cough, even purulent, is common in acute bronchitis and does not correlate with bacterial infection.

RED FLAGS (consider further workup for pneumonia)³

- ◆ Fever greater than 100 degrees
- ◆ Tachypnea (>24 breaths/minute)
- ◆ Tachycardia (>100 beats/minute)
- ◆ Rusty or bloody sputum
- ◆ Dyspnea
- ◆ Exam finding consistent with a focal consolidation (egophony, focal crackles, fremitus)

Management

Antibiotics have not shown to significantly impact the clinical course of acute bronchitis and are not indicated for the routine management of acute bronchitis.⁴

If Pertussis is suspected based on clinical presentation or history of recent exposure, then a macrolide (azithromycin) antibiotic should be prescribed for 5 days.

OTC Cold Preparations

NSAIDs, decongestants and antihistamines are **generally ineffective** for the cough of acute bronchitis.¹

Cough medications

Expectorants (guaifenesin)

Relatively safe with some efficacy in decreasing the cough of acute bronchitis⁵

Antitussives: Provide modest symptomatic relief

- ◆ **Benzonatate (Tessalon pearles)**
- ◆ **Dextromethorphan (OTC preparations)**
- ◆ **Codeine**

Beta-agonists

Albuterol may be effective in patients with evidence of airway obstruction (wheezing, prolonged expiratory phase)⁶

References

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5. Smith S, Schroeder K, Fahey T. Over-the-counter medications for acute cough in children and adults in community settings. Cochrane Database Syst Rev. 2014;(11):CD001831.
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