



DOCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE

Managing Bronchitis

Bronchitis is a common illness that can make it hard to breathe. Asking the right questions during your conversation with a doctor will help you know what to expect and how to better navigate this condition. Familiarize yourself with these common terms before your appointment to help facilitate your discussion.

Vocabulary to Know

Your doctor might mention these common terms. Here's what they mean.

Bronchi	Your airways—essentially, tubes that go down your throat to your lungs. In bronchitis, the bronchi become inflamed, which narrows the airways and makes breathing difficult.
Acute	When referring to an illness, acute means sudden onset. It often indicates an illness that is short lived, progresses rapidly, and requires immediate treatment. Acute bronchitis is generally caused by an infection and goes away when the infection clears up.
Chronic	When referring to an illness, chronic means long-term. Chronic bronchitis develops over time and is typically caused by something ongoing, such as cigarette smoking, pollution, or working in a job where you inhale chemical fumes.
Dry Cough	A cough that doesn't lead to coughing up phlegm. Some cases of bronchitis involve a dry cough.
Productive Cough	A cough that brings up thick or discolored mucus. Bronchitis frequently involves a productive cough.
Sputum	The mucus from a productive cough mixed with saliva.
Sputum Culture	A lab test often performed in someone diagnosed with bronchitis. It can determine whether your sputum contains bacteria, which indicates that you have a respiratory tract infection.
Spirometry Test	A type of pulmonary function test that determines how much your airflow is obstructed in chronic bronchitis.
Pulse Oximetry ("Pulse Ox")	A test measuring the level of oxygen saturation in your blood. It's done with a pulse oximeter, which is a small device that's usually placed over the end of a finger and is able to provide a quick reading right through your skin.
Bronchodilators	An inhaled drug, often prescribed to people with bronchitis, that relaxes the bronchial tubes, which opens the airways further and allows you to breathe better. It may be referred to as a "rescue inhaler."



Questions to Ask

These questions will help you start a conversation with your doctor about how to best manage your bronchitis.

About Symptoms

- How long will symptoms last after I start treatment?
- What symptoms could develop that are cause for concern?
- Will my symptoms go completely away?

About Causes & Risk Factors

- How can I lower my risk of getting bronchitis again?
- Can I spread bronchitis to other people?

About Diagnosis

- What tests will I need?
- When will the results be in?
- How can I be sure it's bronchitis and not something else, such as asthma, emphysema, or pneumonia?

About Treatment

- What drugs do you recommend?
- What side effects should I watch for?
- What non-drug treatments are available?
- Are there home remedies that can help ease my symptoms?

About Coping

- Do I need to change jobs or take special precautions at work?
- How can I be more comfortable while I'm recovering?
- What kinds of physical activities are okay?
- How should I handle situations where I'm exposed to pollution, chemical fumes, or other possible irritants?
