

# Immediate care doctor talks about bronchitis

May 18 2015, by Evie Polsley

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When a cold has lasted too long or a cough is especially bothersome, it's important to see a medical professional.

"We see a lot of cases of [bronchitis](#) at our immediate care centers. Although most cases are caused by viruses such as the [common cold virus](#) or influenza virus, bronchitis can lead to more serious conditions such as pneumonia which requires medical treatment," said Khalilah Babino, DO, immediate care physician at Loyola University Health System and assistant professor in the Department of Family Medicine at Loyola University Chicago Stritch School of Medicine.

Dr. Babino warns even if it starts with a common cold, bronchitis can lead to dangerous conditions such as pneumonia.

Bronchitis is a serious condition of the [lower respiratory tract](#) and occurs when bronchi of the lungs become inflamed. Symptoms of bronchitis include:

- Fever
- Chills
- Chest congestion
- Productive [cough](#) that lasts longer than five days

"The cough can last two to three weeks and could be an indicator of a more serious condition. If symptoms persist for more than seven to ten days or symptoms start to get worse see a healthcare provider," said Babino.

According to Babino, other symptoms of a more serious condition include:

- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath
- Wheezing

"Many people assume when they are diagnosed with bronchitis that they need an antibiotic. However, bronchitis is commonly caused by a virus so antibiotics would not be helpful to patients," said Babino.

Instead, she says treatment is supportive, including rest, fluids, a humidifier, fever and pain relievers and over-the-counter cough medication.

"If there is shortness of breath, difficulty in breathing or wheezing some patients may require breathing treatments with an inhaler or nebulizer. The patient may also need a short course of oral steroid medication. If breathing problems are severe it's best for the person to be evaluated in an emergency room," said Babino.

While it's impossible to avoid all illnesses, Babino gives the following tips to help keep you well:

- Practice good hand hygiene. Wash your hands often and use hand sanitizer gel when soap and water aren't available
- Cover your cough and sneeze
- Maintain a healthy lifestyle with a balanced diet, adequate sleep, consistent exercise and routine preventive care such as the annual flu shot

Provided by Loyola University Health System

Citation: Immediate care doctor talks about bronchitis (2015, May 18) retrieved 12 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-05-doctor-bronchitis.html>

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