Tips for managing adult chronic dry cough
alongside your doctor's treatment

Coughing can have a big impact on your physical and emotional health. If you have been coughing most days for more than 8 weeks, see your doctor for treatments that target the cause of your cough. The tips in this factsheet may help support and complement the advice provided by your doctor.

Self-management strategies for cough

Things you can try



Breathe through your nose, not your mouth, to reduce dry air contacting your throat



Use a hand-held fan on your face when you feel like you need to cough



Minimise breathing in cold air. For example, wear a mask or cover your nose and mouth with a scarf when walking outside



Keep your throat moist by sipping water every 15–30 minutes



Try breathing in steam for 10–15 minutes (or as long as you can tolerate). You can inhale steam when in the shower or from hot water in a sink



Try sucking on menthol or honey lozenges. Avoid flavoured or butter-based lozenges as they are not as effective



Speak with your doctor about alternative options that might help. Some people report a benefit from taking slippery elm, ginger, marshmallow root or honey



Try swallowing when you have a tickle in your throat to suppress a cough



Learn breathing exercises that can help you control your cough. Some people find yoga-based breathing useful. The next page includes some exercises you can try

Things you should avoid



Things that may make you cough such as extreme temperatures and environmental hazards - dust, smoke or aerosol chemicals



Caffeine and alcohol as they can dry out your throat



Smoking or vaping. It affects your health and worsens your cough. For support to quit, talk to your GP or call Quitline on 13 78 48. Also avoid breathing in any second-hand smoke



Speaking for long periods of time or take breaks as needed to reduce irritation in your throat

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Breathing exercises for dry cough

These breathing exercises are for dry cough and are not suitable for a wet or productive cough. Ask your doctor if a referral to a speech pathologist, specialising in voice therapy is suitable for you.

You can use these techniques at any time to get your coughing under control, including if you are having a severe episode. These techniques are not a one-size-fits-all approach.

- Aim to do this 3 times a day, with a 5–10 second break in between
- Practice in short bursts (a few minutes) spread out throughout the day

The stop cough technique

1. As soon as you feel you are about to cough, put your hand over your mouth
2. Swallow once
3. Hold your breath for up to 10 seconds
4. Take a small breath in and out through your nose
5. Then, breathe slowly and gently through your nose for at least 30 seconds with your hand over your mouth
6. Tell yourself, “I am not going to cough”
7. Take a smooth, normal-sized breath through your nose and remove your hand away from your mouth
8. If you still feel the tickle in your throat, repeat the exercise from the beginning until the tickle stops

Sniff and voice breathing exercise

1. Take a sharp sniff in through your nose
2. Blow the air out in one gentle breath through your mouth making a ‘dge’ or ‘zz’ sound

Tip: Try to breathe out for 2–3 seconds

Scan the QR code to watch **the sniff and voice breathing exercise demonstration** by Northumbria Healthcare

Watch Lung Foundation Australia’s cough control video

Scan the QR code to watch Lung Foundation Australia’s **simple breathing exercise demonstration** for cough relief, with Dr Danielle Stone, Clinical Specialist Speech Pathologist

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Looking after your mental health

Manage your stress and anxiety

Anxiety and stress may make your cough worse. If you feel overwhelmed, you could try:



Slow breathing. Count to 3 as you slowly inhale and then count to 6 as you exhale. Counting longer as you breathe out helps calm you down



Mindfulness. This is a way to help with anxiety and stress. Try focusing on:

- What you can hear and see around you. Try to notice things you may not have noticed before
- How you feel, physically and emotionally. Be aware of your body and where your body is to create a safe space around you



Relaxation techniques. Try doing things that you find relaxing, like listening to calming music or doing some yoga or meditation



Visualisation. Find a quiet place and use your imagination to paint a calming mental picture. For example, you may imagine you are at the beach, and you can:

- Hear the waves crashing
- Smell the salty air
- Feel the warmth of the sun
- See the bright blue sky



Join a support group for people who have similar conditions. Just knowing that you are not alone can help to manage stress and anxiety. You can visit the Lung Foundation Australia website to find a support group or call our Lung Health Helpline

There are lots of different things you can do to help manage stress and anxiety but it may take a few tries until you find something that works for you. You can also speak with your doctor or healthcare professional so they can talk you through different strategies.

Take control of your cough management

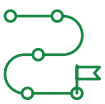
Finding what works best for you can help you manage your cough.



Try keeping a diary to track your cough. This will help you talk to your doctor about your symptoms, and come up with strategies for when your cough is at its worst



Have a clear list of medications that you take, so you can tell any doctors, pharmacists or allied health professionals. This helps ensure new medicines do not interfere with other treatments



Have a clear plan to manage your coughing so you know exactly what to do when it starts



Educate other people that a chronic cough may be caused by other health problems. This can help other people understand it is not contagious

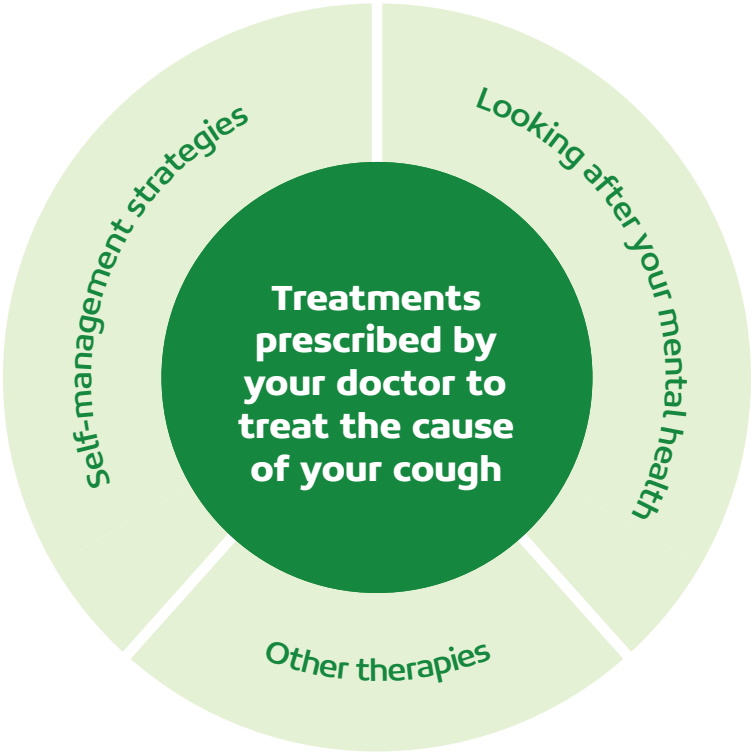


Other therapies such as voice-specialist speech pathology and chronic cough clinics may help you control your cough. Ask your doctor if other approaches might be helpful for you

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A holistic approach to managing chronic cough

Everyone is different, managing your cough often needs more than one approach. Follow the treatments prescribed by your doctor first, then include other approaches to help you take control of your cough.



Scan the QR code to find out more about **potential treatment approaches**

If you need further support, try reaching out to these free counselling support services:

Beyond Blue

Lifeline

Further information and support

Contact our Lung Health Helpline on 1800 654 301. This free and confidential service is available Monday to Friday 8:00am – 4:30pm (AEST) (excl. public holidays) or fill in the form on our website.

lungfoundation.com.au | Lung Health Helpline (Free call) 1800 654 301 | enquiries@lungfoundation.com.au

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