

# Medicines and other treatments for a long-lasting cough for adults

If you've had a cough most days for more than 8 weeks, it's important to have a yarn with your GP. Home remedies or cough syrup from the shop might help for a short time, but they won't fix the real cause if something bigger is going on.

## Your treatment depends on what's causing the cough

A long cough can come from lots of things, like:

- Dust, smoke, or chemicals at work
- Nose or sinus problems
- Issues with your throat
- Reflux from your stomach
- Asthma, bronchitis, COPD or other lung sickness
- Heart problems
- Infections

Your GP will work with you to find the right treatment for your body and your health story.

## Treatments for coughs linked to lung problems

### 1. Asthma

- You might need inhalers or changes to your current asthma medicines
- Your GP may show you the right way to use an inhaler (many people don't realise they're using it wrong!)

### 2. Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) or chronic bronchitis

- Reviewing your medicines
- Quitting smoking or vaping
- Pulmonary rehab to help you clear mucus and breathe easier
- Having a plan to follow if symptoms get worse

### 3. Eosinophilic bronchitis

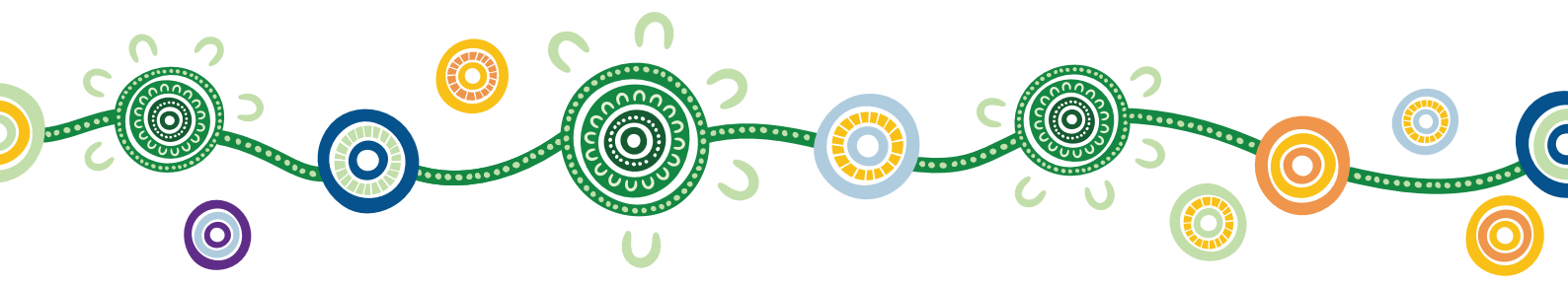
- Inhaled steroid medicines

### 4. Bronchiectasis

- Antibiotics
- Pulmonary rehab to help you clear mucus and breathe easier
- Having a plan to follow if symptoms get worse

### 5. Interstitial lung diseases (ILD)

- Your GP will find what treatment options are right for you depending on your specific lung disease



## 6. Lung cancer

If you have lung cancer, it's important to know that cancer treatments don't always help with coughing. If your cough isn't improving, your doctor may look for other causes or suggest different ways to manage it, such as:

- Breathing exercises to help reduce coughing
- Endobronchial brachytherapy (a treatment that uses strong, targeted radiation on tumours)
- Other medications that can help ease the cough

## When doctors can't find the cause

Sometimes the cause stays unknown, even after tests. If this happens, a specialist can help you manage your cough with:

- Lifestyle changes
- Speech therapy
- Tweaking your medicines
- Trying different treatments to see what helps

## Treatments for other causes

### 1. Nose or sinus problems

- Nose sprays or salt-water rinses

### 2. Throat problems

- Your GP may send you to a speech pathologist who specialises in voice

### 3. Reflux (GORD) or swallowing problems

- Changing eating habits
- Not lying down or sleeping soon after eating
- Medicines to help settle your stomach

## Be careful with cough medicines

Before you buy cough syrup or tablets, have a yarn with your GP or pharmacist. Some cough medicines don't work for long coughs – and some can even make things worse.

## Follow-up care

**Treatments can take time, so keep track of:**

- How often you cough
- What makes it better or worse
- Any side effects from medicines

**Bring this info about your symptoms to your check-ups. It helps your GP understand what's working and what's not.**

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