

Key Points:

Common breathing problems are pneumonia, bronchitis, asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

General Instructions:

- If you smoke, it is recommended that you stop smoking. Smoking makes you more likely to get lung infections and makes them last longer when they do occur. Do not let anyone smoke near you.
- It is important to take medication as prescribed **until it is finished**, even if your symptoms go away.
- Drink plenty of fluids. Drinking fluids helps to loosen secretions in the throat and lungs and makes them easier to cough out.

What can I take for pain (such as body aches) or fever?

For pain relief and/or fever you may use acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Advil®) unless you have been told not to (for example, if you have stomach ulcers, or asthma these medications may aggravate your symptoms).

PNEUMONIA

Pneumonia can be caused by a virus or bacteria. It is difficult to determine what the source is by looking at the x ray, so most patients will be given an antibiotic.

- It is important to take the medication as prescribed **until it is finished**, even if your symptoms go away.
- Avoid cough suppressants. Coughing is your body's way of clearing the secretions and infection.
- Usually, you will begin to feel better after 2-3 days of antibiotics. If you are otherwise a healthy person, you should feel close to normal after about one week.
- Get extra rest until you are feeling better

These instructions are not intended to be all-inclusive and may not cover all possibilities. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your doctor, Health 811 at 1 (866) 797-0007 or return to the Emergency Department.



BRONCHITIS

Most cases of bronchitis are caused by viral infections, and do not respond to antibiotics.

- Under certain circumstances, your doctor may prescribe you an antibiotic, if so, it is important to take the medication as prescribed **until it is finished**, even if your symptoms go away.
- You may try over the counter cough medication but should be aware that they do not make your cough go away faster and can cause side effects such as drowsiness.

Check with your pharmacist if you take other medications or have other medical problems

Exacerbation of COPD (Emphysema, Chronic Bronchitis)

COPD is caused by permanent damage to your lungs, usually related to smoking. Even though the damage is permanent, if you are still smoking you should stop. This will minimize any future damage and improve your ability to fight lung infections.

- For COPD, your doctor will commonly prescribe antibiotics, and in addition, may also prescribe a steroid medication (i.e. prednisone), and some inhaled medication (puffers). It is important to take the medication as prescribed **until it is finished**, even if your symptoms go away.

These instructions are not intended to be all-inclusive and may not cover all possibilities. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your doctor, Health 811 at 1 (866) 797-0007 or return to the Emergency Department.



ASTHMA

- Most cases of asthma exacerbations are caused by viral infections or allergies and do not respond to antibiotics. You may get a prescription for antibiotics only if your doctor thinks it will be helpful for you.
- Your doctor may prescribe a steroid medication (i.e. prednisone) to help reduce the inflammation in your lungs. There are many side effects to steroid drugs, but most only occur if you take them for a long time.

If you develop sudden pain in your hips or legs while taking the steroid medication, stop taking it and call your doctor

Take your puffers as directed by your doctor, or according to your asthma action plan. You should use an AeroChamber or other spacer device when taking your puffer and make an appointment with your doctor to review your overall asthma plan. If you don't have an asthma action plan, your family doctor, the emergency doctor or walk in clinic doctor can refer you to the Asthma Clinic at RVH.

Two types of Puffers:

- Relievers (Ventolin, Salbutamol, Bricanyl)
 - Take if you are short of breath, wheezing or coughing.
- Preventers (QVAR, Flovent, Advair)
 - Use regularly as prescribed, do not take extra times if you are not feeling well.

These instructions are not intended to be all-inclusive and may not cover all possibilities. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your doctor, Health 811 at 1 (866) 797-0007 or return to the Emergency Department.



Breathing Problems - Adult

Return to Emergency Department or call 911 immediately if:

- You develop severe difficulty breathing or severe chest pain
- You have difficulty swallowing or experience swelling of the mouth or tongue
- You or someone else notices bluish discoloration of your lips or tongue

Call your primary care provider or return to Emergency Department if:

- Your cough is becoming worse
- You develop a new fever, or if you already had one, it is not going away
- You are not feeling better after 2-3 days
- You are unable to take your medication due to nausea or vomiting



These instructions are not intended to be all-inclusive and may not cover all possibilities. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your doctor, Health 811 at 1 (866) 797-0007 or return to the Emergency Department.

