

Chronic Cough

Any cough lasting **more than 2 months** is called a chronic cough. Your Doctor has asked me to examine your head holes to see if there are abnormalities in your ears, nose or throat that could be causing or irritating your cough. **For Non-Smokers, the top 3 causes** of chronic cough based on World Health Organization data are:

- 1. Post Nasal Drip** – also called UACS – Upper Airway Cough Syndrome – this is due to **allergies or a sinus problem**.
- 2. Asthma** and similar lung conditions.
- 3. Acid Reflux - (“Silent Reflux”)** - this happens when tiny amounts of acidic stomach contents spray your vocal cords and windpipe. Very irritating!

(If you smoke, the most likely cause is the cigarette smoke particles (millions of them) irritating the nose and throat lining. It is **very important you quit smoking** as this causes cancer by screwing up your DNA and cutting off the blood supply to all your other body parts.)

There are **many other, less common causes** for chronic cough including certain **blood pressure medications** (called “ACE inhibitors”), food and environmental **allergies, dry air, chemicals** (like strong perfumes), certain heart conditions (**CHF** – congestive heart failure), nerve irritation after viral infections (**neurogenic cough**), **microaspiration** (accidentally inhaling food, drinks or saliva) and **lung infections and growths**.

It is important to realize that **your cough will not stop overnight**. That is because your body has become very good at coughing. All the muscles and reflexes responsible for coughing are much better developed in you than in people who do not cough. In a way, you are like a **professional athlete of coughing**. So once we figure out the cause of your cough, it will also take some time (**weeks to months**) to de-condition all those powerful cough muscles. So be patient with yourself.

The good news is that **in 94% of patients, we can figure out the cause of the cough** and with treatment (nasal, lung or stomach medicine) we can either make it go away or significantly reduce it. I will work as part of a team with your family doctor and other specialists (lung, gastric, neurology or allergy) to find you a diagnosis. **However, in 6 % of patients, a cause is never found.**

One last thing. The most successful non-prescription cough suppressants seem to be **Fisherman's Friend lozenges - Cherry flavoured (pink ones, sugar free)**. Another natural product that is showing a lot of promise is **Helixia Cough syrup**.

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