

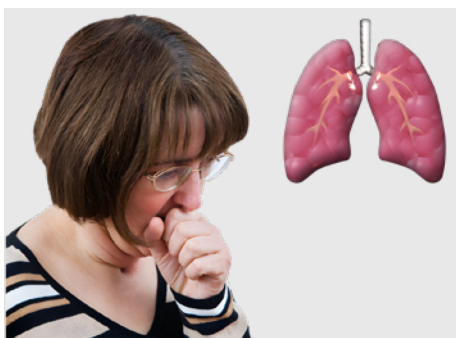
Coughs



What is a cough



This information is about coughs in adults.



When you cough your body cleans your lungs and **airways**.



Airways are tubes that air goes through when you breathe in and out.

When you cough it helps you get things out of your lungs like



- Dust

- **Pollen** from plants.



When you cough it can get rid of **mucus** from your throat and chest.



Mucus is wet and sticky stuff your body makes.

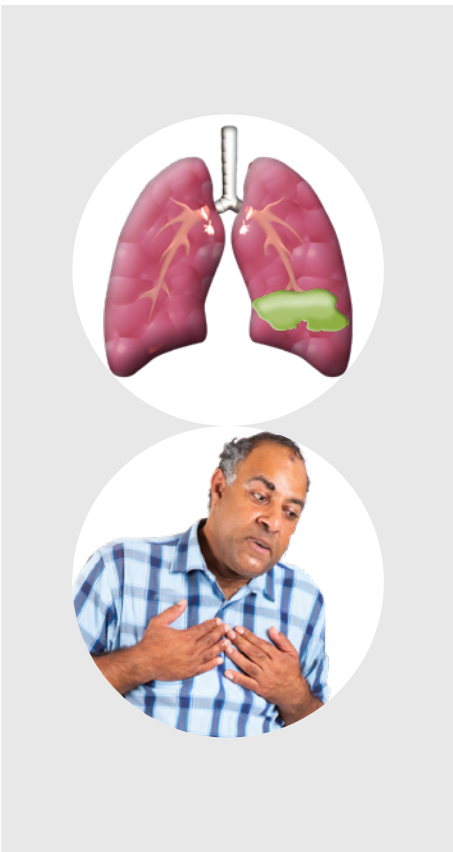
Types of cough



There are different types of coughs.



A **chesty cough** is when you cough up mucus.



If you have a chesty cough you might feel

- Full of mucus
- Like your chest is tight.



A **dry cough** means you do not cough up mucus.



A dry cough can tickle your throat.

Coughs that last a short time



You might have a cough for a short time.



This might be from something like a cold or the flu.



If you are healthy this cough will often go away in 2 to 4 weeks.

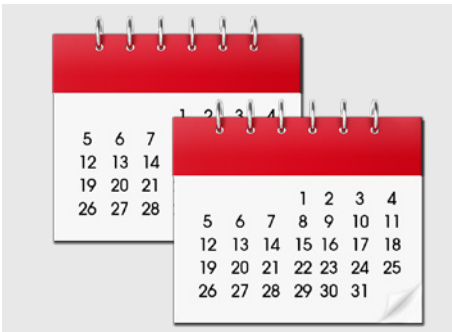


It often gets better on its own.

Cough that lasts a long time



Sometimes a cough can last a long time.



If you have a cough for more than 2 months it is called a **chronic cough**.



Different health issues can make you have a cough for a long time.



You might have a **post virus cough** after being sick with a cold or flu.



Mucus can give you a chronic cough.



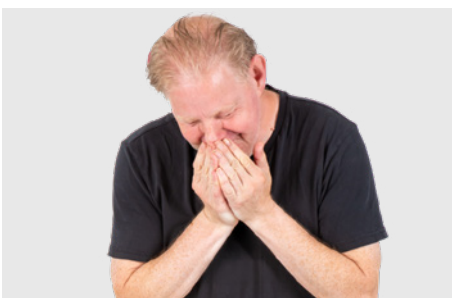
This is when it drips down the back of your throat from your nose.



Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease makes it hard for your lungs to get air.



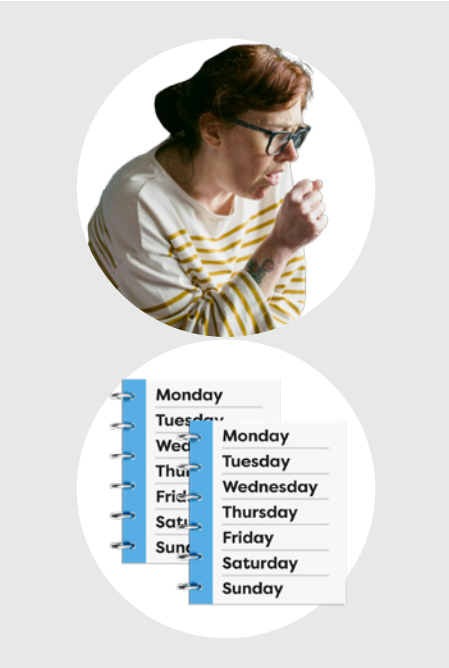
When this happens it makes it hard for you to breathe.



This can make you have a cough for a long time.



Whooping cough might give you a chronic cough.



Whooping cough can

- Make you cough a lot
- Last for 2 weeks or more.



Asthma might give you a chronic cough.



Asthma is a health issue where it can be hard to breathe.



If you have asthma you might also **wheeze** where your chest makes a whistle sound.



You might also have a chronic cough that is called a **habit cough**.



A **habit cough** is when you are not sick but you still cough.

When to see your doctor

You should see your doctor if you



- Have a cough that lasts for more than 1 month



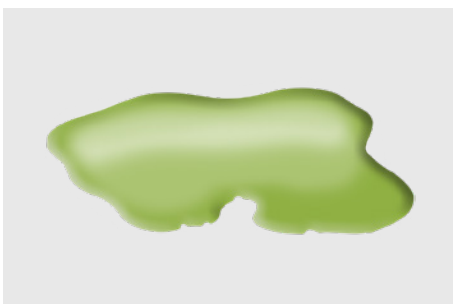
- Feel like it is hard to breathe



- Have pain in your chest



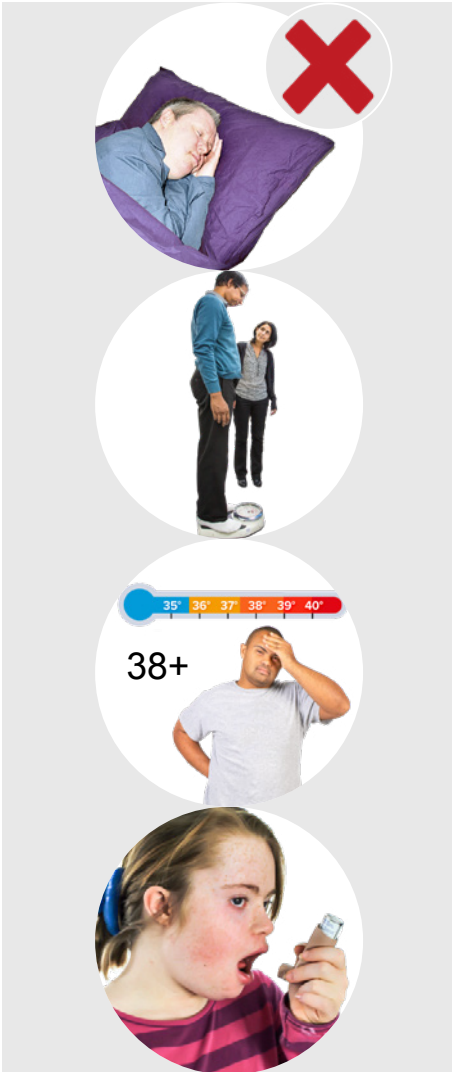
- Feel very tired for no reason.



You should also see your doctor if you have mucus that is green.



You should see your doctor if you cough up blood.



You should also see your doctor if you

- Can not sleep because of your cough
- Lose lots of weight without trying
- Feel very hot for no reason
- Have a bad cough from asthma.



You should see a doctor if your cough is because of medicine you are taking.

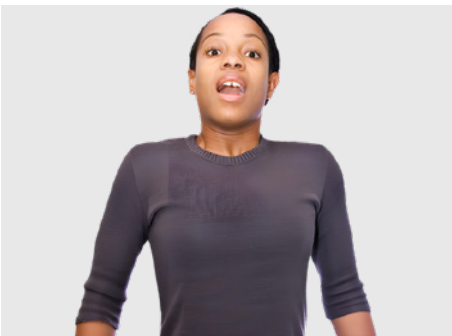
When to call an ambulance



There are times you should call an **ambulance** if your cough gets very bad.



An **ambulance** has health workers who can take you to hospital.



You should call an ambulance if you have trouble breathing.



This might be if you can not speak without stopping to breathe.

Call an ambulance if you have pain that goes into your



- Arms



- Back



- Neck



- Jaw.



You should call an ambulance if you have pain in your chest.



You should call an ambulance if you are very sleepy or can not wake up.



Call an ambulance if your lips are

- Pale
- Blue
- Grey.



Call **000** for an ambulance.

How to treat a cough



There are different ways you can treat a cough.



A cough you have for a short time often gets better on its own.



If you have a chronic cough your doctor can support you to get better.

Things that can make a cough worse



There might be things you do that make your cough worse.



When you have a cough you should not do things like

- Smoke
- Go outside too much where there is lots of pollen in the air.



You should not have **caffeine** or alcohol.



Caffeine makes you feel more awake and is in things like coffee and soft drinks.

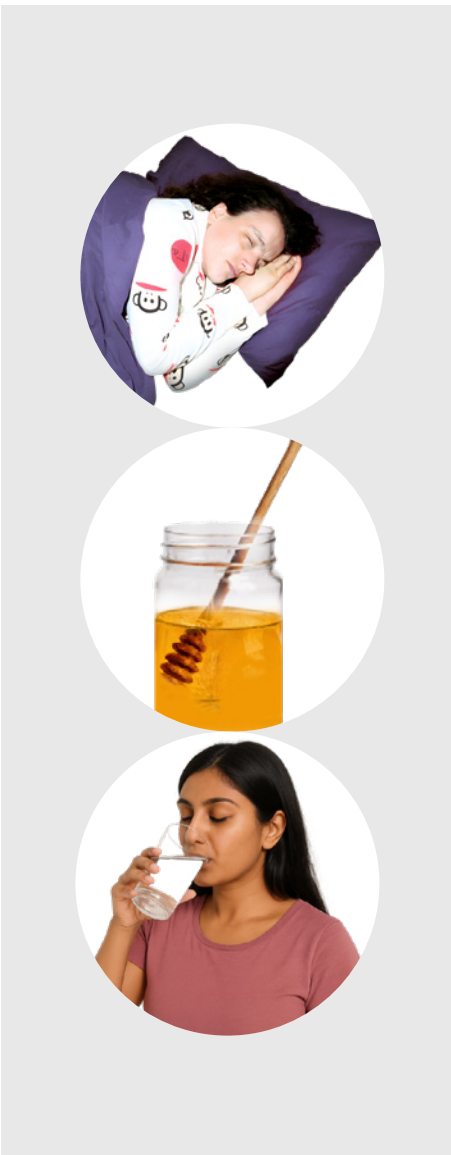


Caffeine and alcohol can dry your throat out and make your cough worse.

Things to do to help your cough



You can do some things to help your cough.



You can

- Rest
- Use honey to make your throat feel better
- Drink lots of water.

Cough medicines



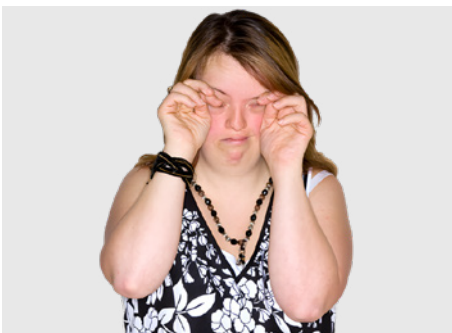
There are lots of cough medicines you can buy without a **prescription**.



A **prescription** is something your doctor gives you to get medicine.



But there might be **side effects** from the cough medicines you can get without a prescription.



Side effects are other things the medicine can do to your body like make you sleepy or feel sick.



You should talk to your **pharmacist** about what medicines to take.

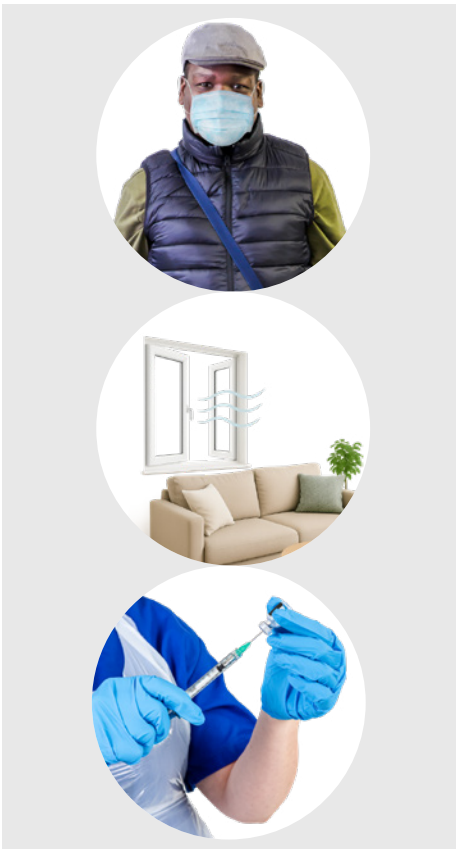


A **pharmacist** is a health worker who knows a lot about medicines.

How to not get a cough



There are some things you can do to help you not get sick and get a cough.



You can do things like

- Wear a face mask in public places
- Open your doors and windows at home to get fresh air
- Get **vaccines**.

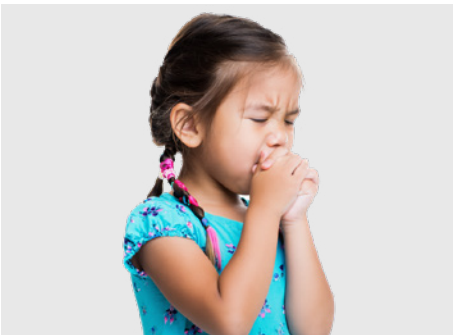


Vaccines are when you have a needle with medicine to stop you getting sick.



You can talk to your doctor or pharmacist about vaccines.

Coughs in children

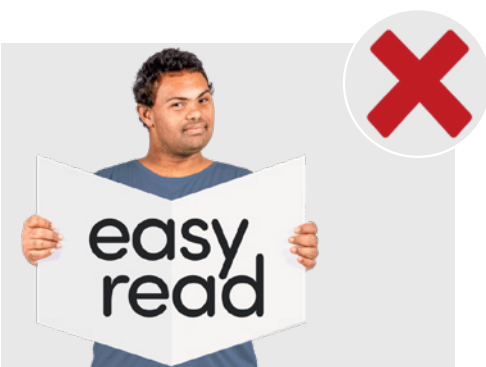


healthdirect also has information about coughs for children.



You can read this information on our website at

www.healthdirect.gov.au/coughs-and-colds-in-children



This information is not Easy Read.

More information

The logo for healthdirect, featuring the word "health" in a dark blue font and "direct" in a red font, with two small orange circles above the "i" in "direct".

You can contact healthdirect for health support on **1800 022 222**.



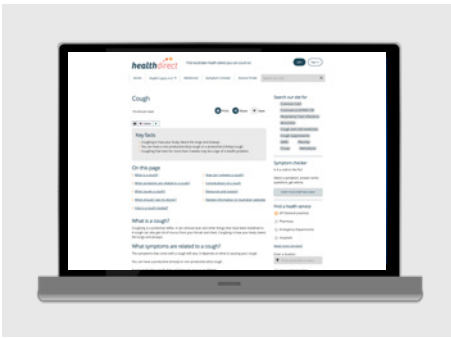
You will speak with a nurse when you call them.



You can call us any day at any time.

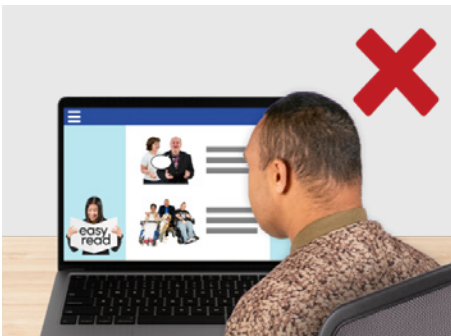
The logo for Nurse on Call, featuring the words "NURSE-ON-CALL" in a bold, dark blue font. A red telephone handset icon is placed between the hyphen and the word "ON".

healthdirect is called **Nurse on Call** in Victoria.



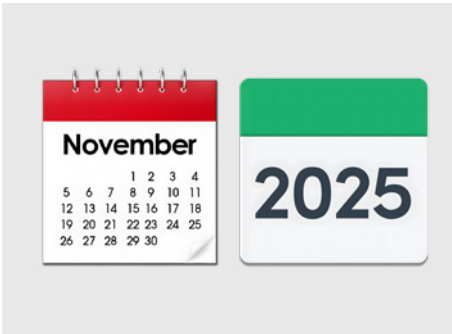
This information came from a longer document on our website at

www.healthdirect.gov.au/cough



This website is not Easy Read.

About this Easy Read



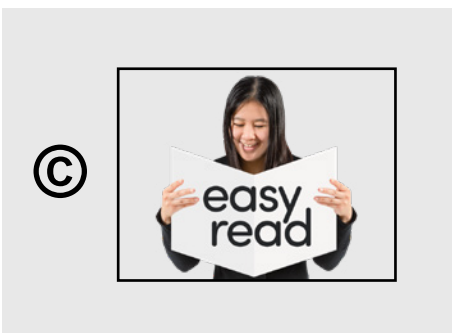
The information in this sheet was last checked in **November 2025**.



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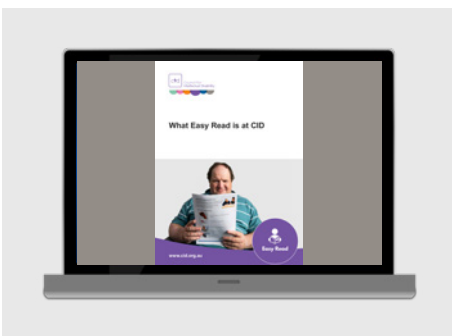
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