

## Four ways to help your cough

1. **Make sure you're drinking plenty of fluids so you don't get dehydrated.**
2. **Take regular paracetamol if you have a temperature or aches and pains. The proper dose for an adult is two tablets four times a day.**
3. **Often taking a simple linctus or sucking a lozenge or sweet is soothing.**
4. **The "old-fashioned" remedy can still work. Take a bowl of one third cold water and two thirds boiling water, add some menthol crystals or Friar's Balsam and inhale the vapour. The moist air is soothing, especially last thing at night. It also helps make your phlegm less sticky and easier to cough up.**

### *Won't an antibiotic make me better?*

Antibiotics often don't help, because:

Most chest infections get better on their own in patients who are normally fit and well.

Research shows that antibiotics don't help most coughs get better quicker.

Antibiotics can have unpleasant side effects (for example, rashes, thrush, stomach upsets and diarrhoea).

Taking antibiotics when you don't need them is not sensible.

Overusing antibiotics produces resistant germs, so the medicines may not work when they are really needed.

Using your own defences to fight off infection helps you resist the same germs next time.

The doctor has examined you during your visit to the surgery today, and even though you feel unwell he or she hasn't found any serious illness that definitely needs antibiotics today.

### *What does "a chesty cough" mean?*

A cough is not a "bad" thing. It is there for a reason. Phlegm (or "sputum") is sticky stuff that acts as a barrier to catch the dust and germs that we breathe in. Coughing helps defend your lungs by making sure that harmful material doesn't settle in the lower lungs where it would cause trouble.

### *When will I be better?*

Your cough is part of your body's defence mechanisms, and is likely to be the last symptom of your illness to disappear. It may take quite a long time to go completely. The process of recovery is likely to take up to two or three weeks to complete. Assuming you are not getting any worse, you need not worry if your cough and phlegm take this time to settle, especially if you are getting gradually better each day.

So, your chesty cough will quite likely get better by itself, and you won't need any antibiotics.

If you develop any new or worrying symptom, it would be sensible to telephone the surgery and make an appointment for a further check.