

Patient Information

- My rescue/ emergency antibiotics are:

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- I need to send a sputum sample in:

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- Also:

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Bronchiectasis

Patient Information Leaflet

Definition

Bronchiectasis is widening and scarring of the airways, which prevents them from being cleared. This leads to thick mucus (sputum) which can build and lead to worsening infection.

Causes

The most common cause is previous infection, often in childhood. Less common causes include: cystic fibrosis, previous TB, hypogammaglobulinaemia (low IgG) and rheumatoid disease.

Symptoms

- Cough – may be intermittent or continuous, dry or productive
- Sputum – may be clear, purulent or blood-stained (or just blood)
- Breathlessness – may be absent, mild increasing to very severe
- Exacerbations (flare ups) – may be occasional or very frequent. An exacerbation might present with a relatively small change in sputum colour, amount or thickness. Blood may be present.
- Fatigue and/or weight loss

Treatment

- Physiotherapy – Sputum clearance techniques are very important
- Pulmonary Rehabilitation training programme - Can be helpful with managing breathlessness
- Fluids and Nutrition – Keeping well hydrated and nourished is really important. If you notice you are losing weight, ensure to seek advice from a health professional.
- Vaccination – Annual against flu and single vaccine against *Pneumococcus* (pneumonia vaccine).

- Antibiotics – A course should always be **10-14 days**. Your GP can use the last sputum result to help choose an antibiotic.
- Regular sputum samples – help us to monitor your condition and choose the right antibiotics when infections occur .

Information really helps with an understanding of this chronic condition and how to help yourself. The British Lung Foundation website has more information:

<https://www.blf.org.uk/support-for-you/bronchiectasis>

Signs of an exacerbation or flare up may include:

- Feeling unwell, perhaps feverish
- Coughing up more sputum than usual
- Your sputum becoming darker in colour (more yellow or green) or tinged with blood.
- Being more breathless or wheezy

If you think your chest is getting worse:

- Send a sputum sample ASAP to ensure you are taking the correct antibiotics.
- Start taking your rescue antibiotics
- Ring Respiratory Nurse Specialists so we can look out for the sputum results.
- See your GP if you are concerned
- Respiratory Nurse Specialists are available Monday to Friday 8.30-4.30 on **01225 825344**. If you leave a message we will return your call.