

Evidence Discussion - Bronchitis (CH-8.1)

Acute bronchitis is a self-limited respiratory infection characterized by cough due to acute inflammation of the trachea and large airways without evidence of pneumonia.¹

²This syndrome should be distinguished from the common cold, an acute exacerbation of chronic bronchitis and acute asthma.¹

Cough associated with acute bronchitis typically lasts about two to three weeks. Other diagnoses must be considered when cough persists for more than three weeks.¹ Acute bronchitis is mainly caused by viruses, and antibiotics are not typically indicated in patients without chronic lung disease^{1, 2}. Imaging is primarily used to rule out pneumonia. Evidence-based guidelines from the American College of Chest Physicians state that imaging is not needed in patients with acute bronchitis symptoms who have normal vital signs and normal lung examination findings.²

Chest radiographs are indicated in patients with symptoms of dyspnea, tachycardia, tachypnea and fever more than 100°F or lung findings suggestive of pneumonia.²

References:

1. Braman SS. Chronic cough due to acute bronchitis: ACCP evidence-based clinical practice guidelines. *Chest*. 2006; 129(1 Suppl):95S-103S. doi:10.1378/chest.129.1_suppl.95s
2. Kinkade S, Long NA. Acute Bronchitis. *Am Fam Physician*. 2016 Oct 1;94(7):560-565.