

Coughs



A cough is a reflex action of the body. There are two types of cough

- **Productive/chesty:** phlegm is produced
- **Dry:** no phlegm production

Coughs are usually mild and self-limiting.

Red flag symptoms

- Cough gets very bad or quickly gets worse
- Chest pains other than that caused solely by cough.
- Very high temperatures, can be a sign of a more serious infection such as pneumonia
- Shortness of breath, can be a sign of a more serious infection such as pneumonia
- Coughing up blood
- Side of the neck feels swollen and painful
- Any cough lasting longer than 21 days
- Weight loss with no reason

Self-care advice

- Treatments options include demulcents, expectorants, cough suppressants and antihistamines
- Rest
- Drink plenty of fluids
- For pain relief from a cough, take a painkiller such as paracetamol or ibuprofen
- Smoking cessation

Onward referrals

- Patients with asthma, a cough could be a sign of poor asthma control
- Persistent nighttime cough in children, could be a sign of asthma.

Signposting

- Pharmacy First Scotland – Antihistamines
- Locally commissioned service for smoking cessation

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