

What is Bronchiectasis?

Bronchiectasis is a long-term lung condition where the airways of the lungs become abnormally widened. This leads to a build-up of excess mucus. This can make the airways of the lungs more vulnerable to infection.

Symptoms can vary widely. Some people only have a few symptoms that don't appear often, while others have wide-ranging symptoms that occur daily.

The lungs are full of tiny branching airways, known as the bronchi. Their role is to move oxygen into even smaller sacs called alveoli. These transfer the oxygen into the blood. It is then transported around the body.

The lining of the bronchi are coated with a sticky fluid called mucus (the same fluid that can come out of your nose when you sneeze). This protects against particles moving down into the lungs and damaging them.

With Bronchiectasis, one or more of the bronchi become abnormally widened. This can trigger a vicious cycle of mucus gathering in the bronchi. This makes them more prone to infection. This further widens the bronchi, leading to a build up of more mucus.

During an infection, the symptoms of bronchiectasis will usually get worse.

THE MAIN SYMPTOMS OF BRONCHIECTASIS IS DAILY COUGH AND SPUTUM

Treatment approaches to Bronchiectasis

Day to Day

- Clear your **chest 2-3 times** per day. Your physiotherapist will have shown you how.
- Take your medication and inhalers as prescribed, although some patient's do not have any.
- Never allow medicines to run out.
- Keep a rescue course of antibiotics at home.
- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Eat a healthy diet and take regular exercise.
- Do not smoke. Ask for help from your Practice Nurse / Pharmacist / NHS Fife Stop Smoking Service for help if you want to stop.
- Keep a supply of sputum pots in the house.

MEDICATION

Name:
Dose:
Action: Reliever / Preventer

Name:
Dose:
Action: Reliever / Preventer

Name:
Dose:
Action: Reliever / Preventer

Name:
Dose:
Action: Reliever / Preventer

Bronchiectasis Action Plan

Your Name:

**Main contact:
GP / Nurse**

Date Plan issued:

Oxygen saturation level when well

Weight & date last checked

Please bring this plan to every review

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR SYMPTOMS GET WORSE

Ask yourself:

Is your cough **worse** than usual?
Are you coughing up **more** sputum than usual?

Then check the colour of your sputum:

Cough sputum onto a white tissue.
Has your sputum changed colour from clear or pale to a **darker shade** e.g., yellow or green?

I FEEL I AM GETTING WORSE

When:

If you have no change in the colour, amount or stickiness of your sputum, but still feel your Bronchiectasis is worse. You should keep checking and if not better in **48 hours** make an appointment to see your GP.

Action:

» Take a sputum sample to your GP. Do not start antibiotics until you have seen your GP.

» Take puff/s of my reliever inhaler
 times per day for days

If no improvement after days:

- Phone the surgery for advice
- Make an urgent appointment

Good Inhaler Technique

To ensure your prescribed medication is being delivered in the right dose to the right place – right into your lungs and not just the back of your throat - please ask your nurse, GP, or pharmacist for help with good inhaler technique.

I FEEL MUCH WORSE

When:

If you feel unwell and have any of the symptoms below:

- ◆ Coughing up more sputum and worsening colour to your sputum
- ◆ Worsening breathlessness
- ◆ Coughing up blood
- ◆ Chest pain

(if the pain feels different to pain normally experienced by you during an infection - contact NHS 24 on freephone 111)

Action:

- » Collect a sputum sample. Start the rescue antibiotics immediately. Do not wait for the sputum result.
- » Telephone GP after one week.

Rescue antibiotic:

Dose:

Frequency: take for 10-14 days

[Free text box]

EMERGENCY

If you have any of the following:

- » Very short of breath
- » Chest pains (that are different from usual pains with infections)
- » Feeling of agitation, fear, drowsiness or confusion
- » Coughing up large amounts of blood (>50ml e.g. equivalent to an egg cupful) is a medical emergency. Seek medical attention urgently if there seems to be a lot of blood

Seek **urgent medical advice**

Or



Dial 999 for an ambulance.

Show them this plan and your oxygen alert card (if you have one)

Remember to take your medication into hospital with you

Support & Self Help

Following diagnosis, people with lung conditions often feel they have no-one to talk to about their experiences and can end up feeling isolated and alone.

Life is home to three long-standing **BreatheEasy Support Groups** which provide a forum for discussion, sharing stories and peer support in relaxed, social environments.

To find out more telephone 01383 426544.

