Guide to Cough Symptoms

Note: This information is not intended to replace the services of your health care provider. Always consult your provider immediately if you are concerned about your cough and follow his or her instructions.

Cough

What is it?

A noisy expulsion of air from the lungs. Coughing is one of the protective mechanisms the body uses to rid itself of substances within the respiratory system. A cough may be "productive" (that is, it produces sputum [phlegm]) or "dry."

Start Do you have a postnasal drip (irritation at the back of your throat), early morning vomiting, and/or sinus pain?

You may have sinusitis, an inflammation of the paranasal sinuses. Steam inhalation, nasal decongestants, and analgesics may relieve your symptoms. If not, discuss the problem with your doctor.

A dry (nonproduc- No Is your Yes You may have sinusitis, an inflammation of the paranasal sinuses. Steam inhalation, nasal decongestants, and analgesics may relieve your symptoms. If not, discuss the problem with your doctor.

A dry (nonproductive) cough may be an early sign of heart failure or a side effect of taking an ACE inhibitor, a type of medication that is often prescribed for heart failure.

You may have chronic broncough cough chitis, an inflammation of the produccontstant mucous membranes lining tive (that or nearly the airways of the lungs. Conis, does it so? sult your doctor. produce phlegm)? Several respiratory condi-Does the phlegm have a tions, including pneumonia yellow tinge? and acute bronchitis, an inflammation of the mucous membranes lining the airways of the lungs, are characterized by an acute, Is the phlegm blood-tinged? productive cough. Consult your doctor.

Your symptoms require evaluation. *Consult a doctor without delay!* If you also have a fever, you may have **pneumonia**. If your symptoms developed suddenly and you ar experiencing pain and difficulty breathing, you may have a **pulmonary embolism**. **Lung cancer** may also cause symptoms of a constant, productive cough and blood-tinged sputum; you are at risk for lung cancer if you have smoked for many years.

If you are unable to diagnose your symptoms using this chart and/or your cough persists for more than 4 days or worsens, consult your doctor without delay!