

# Cough suppression

## Patient information leaflet

**If you need this leaflet in a different language or accessible format please speak to a member of staff who can arrange it for you.**

اگر به این بروشور به زبان دیگر یا در قالب دسترس پذیر نیاز دارید، لطفاً با یکی از کارکنان صحبت کنید تا آن را برای شما تهیه کند.

Jeśli niniejsza ulotka ma być dostępna w innym języku lub formacie, proszę skontaktować się z członkiem personelu, który ją dla Państwa przygotowuje.

Dacă aveți nevoie de această broșură într-o altă limbă sau într-un format accesibil, vă rog să discutați cu un membru al personalului să se ocupe de acest lucru pentru dumneavoastră

如果您需要本传单的其他语言版本或无障碍格式，请联系工作人员为您安排。

إذا احتجت إلى هذه النشرة بلغة أخرى، أو بتنسيق يسهل الوصول إليه، يرجى التحدث إلى أحد الموظفين لترتيب ذلك لك.

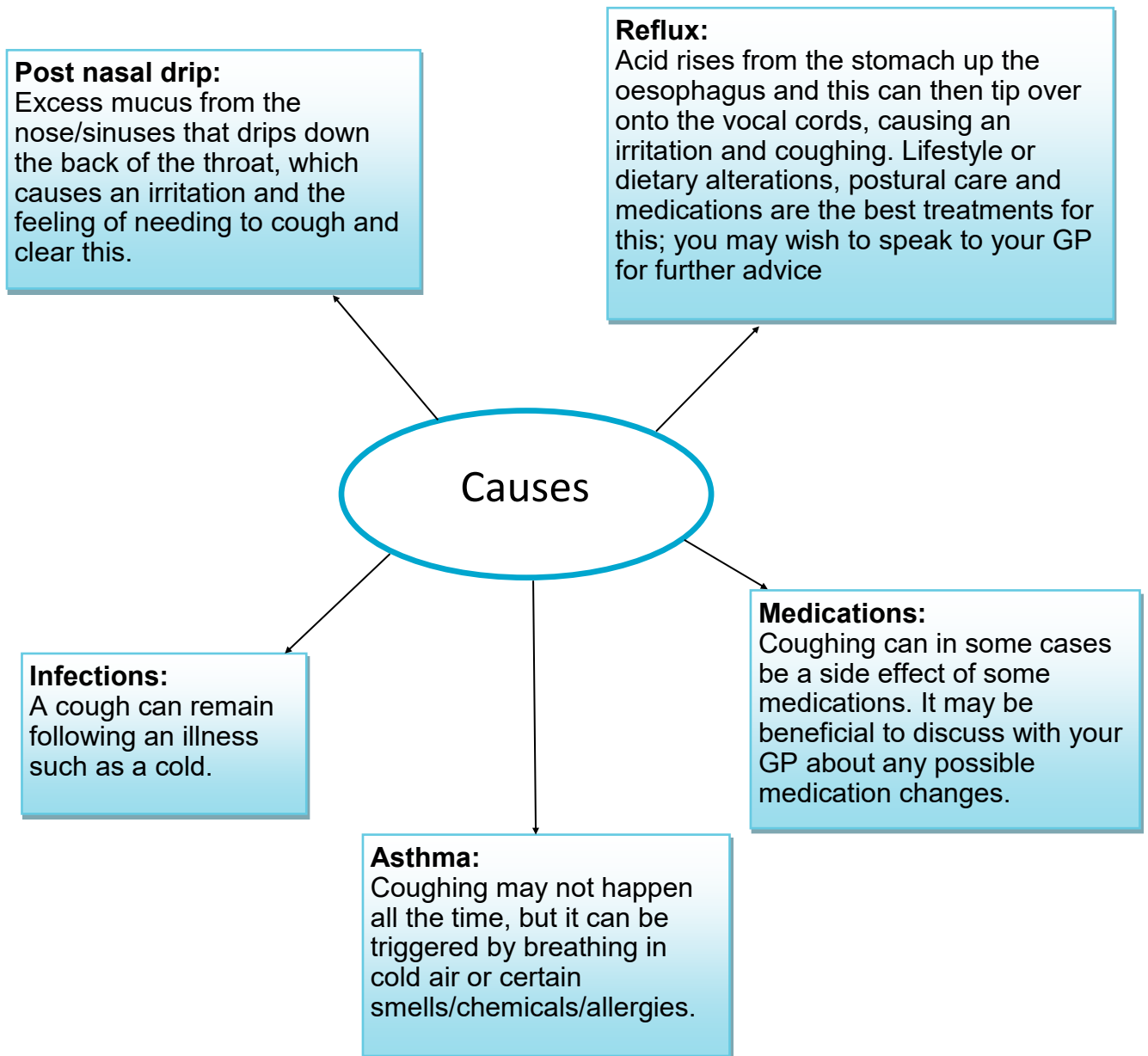
## What is a cough?

Coughing is an important reflex to help clear the throat and to stop foreign bodies entering the airways. If this cough persists for a long period of time more than 8 weeks, it may be classed as a chronic cough. It typically presents as a dry irritable cough, usually not bringing any secretions up.

Once you have coughed, it is likely that you will feel the need to take a big breath and cough again. By doing this you are effectively “feeding” the cough, as each big breath you take will further irritate the lungs, throat and in turn cause a cough.



# Causes



Other causes/ triggers include

- Talking
- Laughing
- Smoking
- Exercise

# Cough suppression strategies

It is important to distinguish if it is wet or dry.

Is your cough wet?

If you can feel sputum and your cough sounds wet (there are secretions), it is important to cough and clear it. You should avoid long bouts of coughing, as this can be tiring and may make your throat or chest sore/tight.

A physiotherapist may provide you with breathing exercises to help clear the sputum.

Your GP may prescribe antibiotics or want to investigate further.

If your cough is dry ( no secretions) use this Stop cough technique below

1. At the first sign of a tickle or as soon as you cough or feel you are about to cough, put your hand over your mouth.
2. Swallow once.
3. Hold your breath for a few seconds. When you start breathing again take slow, smooth breaths for at least 30 seconds while keeping your hand over your mouth.
4. Tell yourself that you are not going to cough.
5. Finally, take a smooth, normal sized breath through your nose and take your hand away from your mouth.
6. If you still feel a tickle in your throat, repeat the exercise from the beginning until the tickle has subsided.

# Alternative strategies

## Other strategies include

- Sipping water regularly; this keeps the throat humidified, whereas caffeine and alcohol dry the throat. Drink 2 litres of water a day, unless advised otherwise by your doctor.
- Sucking boiled sweets, lollies, ice cubes or chewing gum; this increases swallowing frequency and has a soothing effect. Avoid lozenges as they dry the throat.
- Dry swallow several times.
- Drink hot honey, a lemon drink or ginger tea; these contain antioxidants/cough suppressant properties.
- Humidifier/steam inhalation; breathing in more moisture hydrates irritated airways/throat.
- Sleep propped up with extra pillows or pillows in a 'V-shape'; this can reduce coughing and breathing difficulties while sleeping.
- If you have to cough, do so as softly as possible; to reduce high impact (loud) coughing as soon as it starts and prevent throat tenderness.

## Breathing strategies

- Throat massage and/or neck/shoulder stretches if muscle tension from coughing.
- Pursed lip breathing and diaphragmatic breathing: breathe in gently through your nose, then purse your lips making them narrow like you are trying to blow out a candle, focus on trying to make the 'out' breath longer. This relaxes the throat muscles.
- Nasal breathing; breathe in and out through your nose. Breathing in through your nose warms and humidifies air, reducing the irritating effect of dry cold air on the throat. You can combine this with a sniff for example breathing in through your nose in 3-4 short, sharp, quick sniffs, then blow out gently through pursed lips. This channels air and 'cushions' the vocal cords to help reduce irritation.

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