

Is a cough dangerous?

Normally not. One may feel quite sick when suffering from an acute cough but in most cases it is not a sign of serious disease. Indeed apart from being annoying a cough can actually help to remove smoke, dust, fluids, etc. from the airways. Your doctor can rule out serious disease through a medical examination.

Do we need to treat a cough medically?

Mostly not. Only if cough is very irritating, then it may require treatment.

What helps against cough?

When suffering from a cold, viruses are the main cause of a cough. Only in very few cases do bacteria play a role. Antibiotics can only help against bacteria, but not against viruses. The body's own immune system can neutralize viruses and bacteria very effectively. Antibiotics are only needed if complications caused by bacteria occur, as for example in cases of pneumonia. In the past people were worried about pus, because it was seen as a sign that the immune system was failing to cope with an infection. Luckily today we are all generally in better health and therefore we don't have to be frightened of pus to the same extent.

Does a cough disappear faster with antibiotics?

No. Research has proven it.

Why are we very careful with antibiotics?

There are two main reasons: an antibiotic can have side effects and cause harm for those taking them, like every other drug. Furthermore bacteria can become more and more resistant every time they are in contact with antibiotics. In the future antibiotics may no longer work if needed to treat a serious disease.

How do doctors decide on antibiotics?

Doctors decide on the basis of their examination and the information given to them by you. Usually doctors do not prescribe antibiotics for an acute cough. However sometimes doctors are tempted to prescribe antibiotics if patients show them that they suffer very much from the cough.

What can the patient do?

Trust your doctor in the treatment of acute cough. Ask him/her to examine you scrupulously, don't push for an antibiotic. Decide together with your doctor, which treatment is the right one for you!