



Share the Wellness Tip

December 27, 2013

Hacking and Crackling

Hacking coughs can bug others. They also may even keep you up at night. Perhaps it's time you put a chokehold on that nagging cough. For starters, it helps to know what kind of cough you've got: dry or productive.

Productive coughs bring up phlegm, while dry coughs do not. Both types of coughs can be fleeting or they can be chronic, meaning they last more than eight weeks. Short-lived coughs often are caused by colds, while the chronic variety may be due to postnasal drip from allergies, asthma, smoking and some medicines.

You may be able to stifle your cough on your own. If you've got a dry cough, ease the tickle in your throat with a lozenge or cough drop. Can children have cough drops? Children over 6 years old can usually control coughing by sucking on cough drops. Cough drops increase saliva production, which can soothe your child's throat and loosen the cough. A steamy shower also can help soothe your throat.

For a productive cough, try an over-the-counter cough medicine with guaifenesin. This may help you bring up phlegm. And, drink plenty of fluids. If your cough doesn't clear up in two or three weeks, see your doctor. You also should see her if you cough up blood or thick, yellow-green phlegm. Both could be signs of a more serious problem.

Help to stop the spread of germs by getting an annual flu shot, and:

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Put your used tissue in the waste basket.
- If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow, not your hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for 20 seconds.
- If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Children's Physician Network



