Questions for a cough visit

A printable prompt sheet for a conversation with a qualified clinician.

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General health information only. This guide does not diagnose a condition or replace an assessment by a qualified clinician.

Pattern and causes

- What are the most likely explanations for my cough?
- Does its duration fit acute, post-infectious or chronic cough?
- Could asthma, COPD, reflux, allergies, swallowing or a medicine be contributing?
- What exposures or symptoms should I track?

Assessment

- Do I need an examination, chest X-ray, spirometry or another test?
- What would make pneumonia, pertussis or another condition more likely?
- When would a specialist referral be useful?

Safety and follow-up

- Which symptoms mean same-day care, Health811 or 911?
- What is a reasonable follow-up point if the cough continues?
- What should I do if symptoms improve and then worsen?

Ontario access

- Which services are OHIP-insured, program-dependent or private?
- Would a pharmacist or respiratory educator help?
- Which medication coverage pathway should I confirm?

Sources and limitations

Canadian sources are listed first. U.S., U.K. and academic sources supplement the Canadian context. Links were opened and verified on 20 November 2026. This guide uses original wording and does not reproduce third-party text.

Lung Health Foundation — chronic cough: https://www.lung.ca/lung-diseases/chronic-cough/

Lung Health Foundation — causes of chronic cough: https://www.lung.ca/lung-diseases/chronic-cough/causes-of-chronic-cough/

HealthLink BC — coughs age 12 and older: https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthwise/coughs-age-12-and-older

Government of Canada — respiratory infectious diseases: https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/respiratory-infectious-diseases-reduce-spread-personal-protective-measures.html

Canadian Paediatric Society — croup: https://cps.ca/en/documents/position/acute-management-of-croup

Choosing Wisely Canada — paediatrics: https://choosingwiselycanada.org/recommendation/paediatrics/

CMAJ — postinfectious cough in adults: https://www.cmaj.ca/content/cmaj/196/5/E157.full.pdf

Ontario Health — infectious diseases: https://www.ontariohealth.ca/clinical/infectious-diseases

British Thoracic Society — chronic cough: https://www.brit-thoracic.org.uk/clinical-resources/clinical-statements/cough-adults/

NICE NG120 — acute cough: https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng120/resources/cough-acute-antimicrobial-prescribing-pdf-66141652166341

NHS — cough: https://www.nhs.uk/symptoms/cough/

CDC — chest cold acute bronchitis: https://www.cdc.gov/acute-bronchitis/about/index.html

American Thoracic Society — cough: https://www.thoracic.org/patients/patient-resources/resources/PHSCough.pdf

CHEST — chronic cough in children: https://journal.chestnet.org/article/S0012369220303251/pdf

NCBI Bookshelf — cough evaluation and management: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK493221/