



Have you had a cough for more than 3 weeks?

Do you get out of breath easily?

Then you need to tell your doctor.

EasyRead version

**BE CLEAR
ON CANCER**



This leaflet tells you about why it is important to see your doctor if you have had a cough for more than 3 weeks.



And why it is important you see your doctor if you get out of breath doing things you used to be able to do.



It may well be nothing serious but it is best to get it checked.



This leaflet is an easy read version of another leaflet about having a cough and getting out of breath.



You may like to have someone to support you when you look at this leaflet.

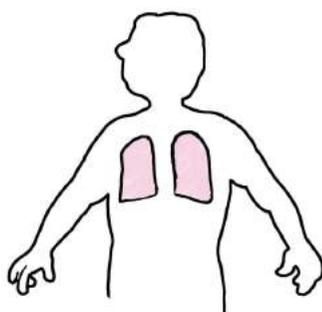
About having a cough



Everyone gets a cough now and again.



But if you have had a cough for more than 3 weeks you need to tell your doctor.



It is probably nothing serious, but there is a chance that it could be a sign of a lung disease.



If you have got a lung disease, finding out quickly means it is easier to treat.

About being out of breath



Everyone gets out of breath now and again.



It is normal to get out of breath when you do things like running.



But if you get out of breath doing things you used to be able to do, like walking up stairs, you should see your doctor.



Being breathless might feel like:

- your breathing is difficult or uncomfortable
- you are not getting enough air.



Some of the things that could be wrong



Having a cough or getting out of breath could be for lots of different reasons.



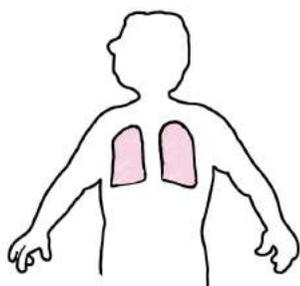
It could be because of some of the illnesses we tell you about next.



Most people get these illnesses because they smoke, but some people get them anyway.



Lots of people do not realise they have these illnesses, but if they are found early they are easier to treat.



Lung cancer

In England lung cancer is one of the most common cancers.



It affects people of all ages but is most common in older people.

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease



This is the name given to some illnesses which affect the lungs. It is sometimes called COPD for short.

They make it difficult to breathe and can also cause a cough.



Heart disease

Chest pains and getting out of breath can be signs of heart disease.



Getting out of breath could also be for another reason like being worried.



Whatever the reason it may well be nothing serious but whatever it is, the sooner you see your doctor the better.



How to spot it

If you have been coughing for more than 3 weeks or you get out of breath, you need to see your doctor straight away.



You also need to see your doctor if you have any of these:

- a cough that gets worse



- chest infections that keep coming back



- coughing up blood



- a pain in your chest or shoulder that has not gone away



- you are wheezing



- for some time you have been feeling more tired than usual



- you have been losing weight for no reason.



If you or anyone you know has any of these signs, get them to see their doctor.

And remember, you are not wasting anyone's time by going to see your doctor.

About your visit to the doctor



Your doctor will ask you questions like:



- how long has this been going on for



- has it changed in any way.



They might ask you to have some simple tests, like an x-ray. These are quick and easy and nothing to worry about.



Before you see your doctor it might help to write down anything that is wrong with you, to show them.



You can find your doctor's contact details at www.nhs.uk/findgp



Why it is important to see your doctor

In 2003 Ann went to see her doctor straight away when she had a cough that would not go away.

She says “I am so glad I did, even though they told me I had lung cancer.”



Ann had treatment and says “I am still here and can do all the things I used to do before I had cancer, like swimming and long walks.”



Keeping well

There are things you can do to give you the best chance of not getting any of these illnesses.



Stop smoking

The best thing you can do to keep well is to stop smoking.



You can get lots of help to stop smoking at the website:
www.nhs.uk/smokefree

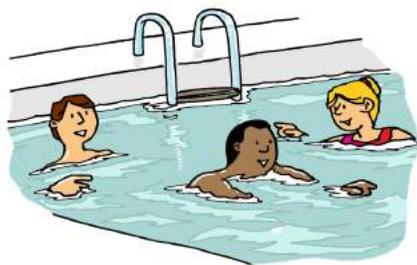


Or call:
0300 123 1044



Look after yourself

Try to stay a healthy weight and keep active. The more you do, the better. Try:



- swimming



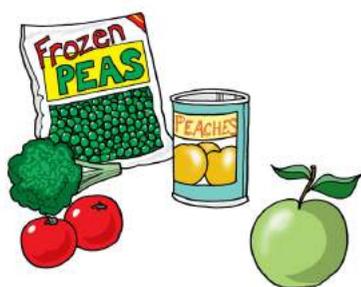
- cycling



- dancing



- walking.



Eat well

It is good to try and have a healthy diet.
Try to eat more fruit and veg.



Cut down on drinking

Try not to drink too much alcohol.



More information

You can find out more about being healthy at:

www.nhs.uk/oneyou



How to find out more

If you want to find out more you can go to our website:

www.nhs.uk/beclearoncancer

Or if you want to order copies of this leaflet in different formats, email:
enquiries@phe.gov.uk

nhs.uk/beclearoncancer

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