

How to recognise an exacerbation

Some or all of the following:

- ❖ Coughing more than usual
- ❖ Coughing up more sputum than usual or sputum is thicker than normal
- ❖ Sputum is darker or has changed colour
- ❖ More breathless than normal
- ❖ You feel tired and lethargic
- ❖ You are coughing up blood, which is not usual for you.

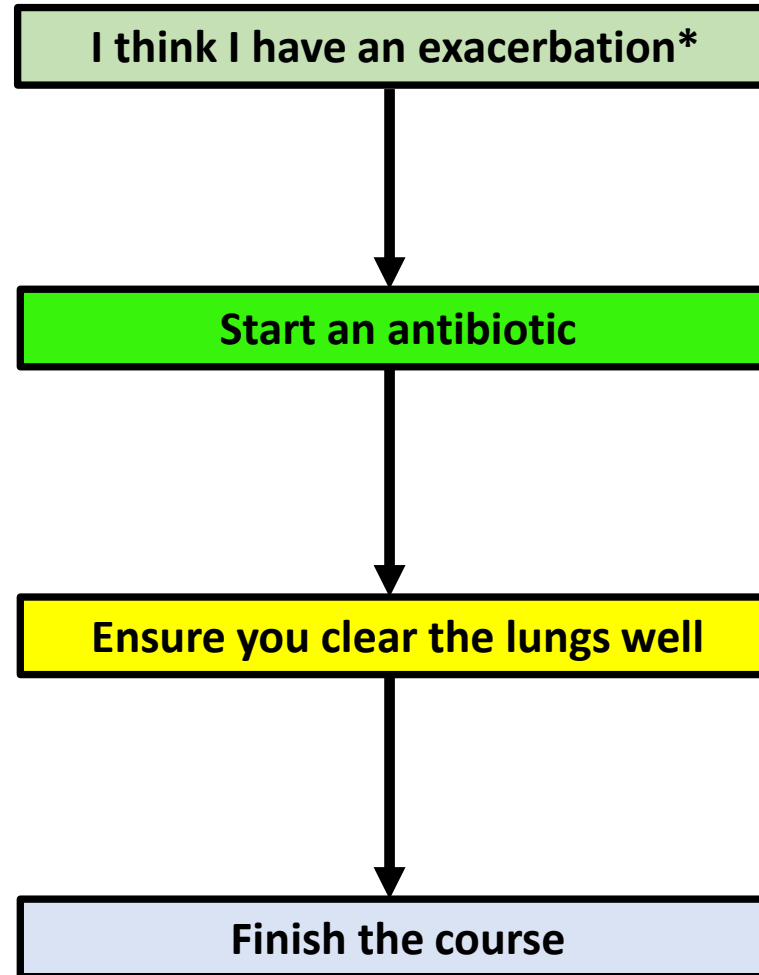
The more of these symptoms you have, the more likely it is that you have a chest infection.

Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

Look at our FAQs on our website for information about sputum samples and how to treat exacerbations.

Treatment of exacerbations

Key steps to follow



What to do next

Contact your doctor and ask for an appointment. If you have a home supply of antibiotics, consider starting them

Send a sputum sample to the lab before you start the antibiotic if possible

Remember to do your physiotherapy exercises during an exacerbation to clear the extra mucus from the lungs.

Drink plenty of water to avoid the mucus getting too thick.

Most patients will get 14 days of antibiotics for a chest infection. You might not feel completely back to normal, but should feel much better. If you do not feel better get in touch with your doctor as you may need more treatment.

Are you having a lot of exacerbations?

If you are having a lot of exacerbations and especially if you have more than 3 exacerbations per year, talk to your doctor about whether there is anything you can do to reduce the number of chest infections.

**an exacerbation is also sometimes called a chest infection or a "flare up" of bronchiectasis*