Sample Adult Acute Bronchitis Algorithm

Provided by Harvard Vanguard Medical Associates

Cough suppressants (dextromethorphan OR codeine)

Guidelines and algorithms are intended to provide assistance in the diagnosis and management of various conditions. Their use is not mandatory and is not a substitute for clinical judgment. Clinicians are responsible for deciding on their relevance to any particular patient or clinical situation and for using them appropriately.

Do:
- Antitussives can be helpful (dextromethorphan OR codeine)
- Bronchodilators helpful in select patients with wheezing

Don’t:
- Antibiotics not recommended; < 6% acute bronchitis bacterial and most of those cases little improvement with antibiotics. Smokers without COPD are not high risk and do not need antibiotics.
- Expectorants and mucolytics not helpful (guafenesin [Mucinex])

Risk factors for complications — may consider antibiotics in these patients:
- COPD or bronchiectasis
- Immunocompromised
- CHF

Smokers, diabetics, and asthmatics are not high risk for bacterial infection.

*Patients age > 75 may have pneumonia even without focal chest findings.

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