

What is Phlegm (Flem) and How to get rid of it?

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Oh my, what was that thing you just coughed up? That can't be good for you. Technically, it's mucous, but when mucous becomes congealed and visible it is considered phlegm, the product of your mucous membranes attempting to fight an infection of sorts--and it is good for you.

Phlegm is differentiated from other mucous in that it comes from the lungs rather than from the nasal passages; though, post nasal drip, a common symptom of colds, flus, sinusitis, and inhaling other irritants is often the cause of a phlegm like build up.

If you're coughing up colored phlegm, it's usually a sign of bronchial infection, but simple diagnoses can be made from the color of the phlegm. If you're coughing up yellow, green, or brown phlegm, your body is in the process of fighting an infection. If the color of your phlegm is brown or gray, it may be your body is expelling tars or resins built up from smoking or inhaling large amounts of dust. Regardless of the color of your phlegm, if you're cough it up, you should probably go see a doctor. For the time being though, let us focus on getting rid of phlegm, because that's what you came here to learn, isn't it?

Treatment for Phlegm

Are you a smoker? If so, it's obvious that to get rid of phlegm you'll need to quit smoking. Lung and bronchial infections are common enough, but they are even more common in people who smoke regularly. If you are cough up brown or grayish phlegm, it's your body trying to tell you you're smoking too much. Do yourself a favor and quit smoking now before you start seeing the inevitable streaks of blood in your phlegm that preclude a diagnosis of lung cancer.

If you're suffering from a sinus infection, a cold, or the flu, using a nasal spray or decongestant will help get rid of that phlegm. While post nasal drip isn't necessarily considered phlegm because it's produced by the mucous glands in your nasal cavities, it is the most common cause of chest congestion, and can be easily cured by taking a decongestant like Sudafed, Claritin, or Zyrtec.

If you're suffering from bronchitis or a chest cold, then taking an expectorant should help loosen up your phlegm. An expectorant cough medicine is different from a cough suppressant, because an expectorant is supposed to loosen the phlegm and make you cough--what they call a productive cough, which is good for people suffering from chest congestion or an infection in the lungs or bronchial tubes. Mucinex and Robitussin are both common OTC expectorants. If you want to get rid of phlegm, don't take a cough suppressant or use throat lozenges. Cough medicines that are not explicitly labeled as expectorants will only serve to exacerbate your phlegm troubles. Anything that helps to numb the pain of a cough or suppress a cough will allow more mucous and phlegm to build up because you've essentially shut off the mechanisms in your body that are meant to produce, well, productive coughs.

Don't swallow that phlegm if you want to get rid of it. Phlegm functions as a sticky film, filled with infection fighting substances like glycoproteins and immunoglobulins, which attaches itself to the lining of your bronchial tubes and lungs. Generally speaking, when phlegm starts to get coughed up, it means that the substance has served its purpose and needs to be expelled.

Spit that phlegm into a tissue rather than trying to swallow it, because swallowing often times reintroduces the phlegm back into your pulmonary (lung) system.

Commercial Phlegm Cures

As noted above, products like Robitussin and Mucinex are called expectorants, and there are plenty of them. These are just a few of the most common expectorants available over the counter:

- * GuaiLife
- * Ethex 208
- * Humibid
- * Congestac
- * Vicks 44E
- * Sinufed

Two of these medications listed are not available over the counter: Sinufed and Congestac. These are by no means the only options available to you. There are plenty of natural expectorants to help you get rid of phlegm, some examples are found in the sidebar to your.