Chronic Cough in Adults with Down Syndrome
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Definition:
Chronic cough is defined as any cough that lasts greater than three weeks. It is a common condition in adults with Down syndrome. Reasons that chronic cough have a higher frequency in people with Down syndrome include but are not limited to:

- Craniofacial features
- Adeno-tonsillar hypertrophy
- Airway size
- Low tone of airway muscles
- Cardiac disease
- Obesity

Causes include but are not limited to:

- Post-nasal drip (mucus from sinuses dripping down to the back of the throat)
- Asthma
- GERD (Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease, “heartburn”)
- Chronic bronchitis
- Viral or bacterial upper respiratory infection including the “common cold”
- Flu (influenza)
- Habitual cough (cough that is behavioral or tic-like in nature; repetitive movements and sounds are common in some adults with Down syndrome)

If a person with Down syndrome has a persistent cough, it is important for he or she to see a healthcare provider to evaluate the cause of the cough.

A healthcare provider can use many tools to help narrow down the cause of the chronic cough such as:

- A good history of symptoms and a physical exam
- Rapid flu test
- Spirometry (test for asthma or COPD)
- Chest x-ray
- Blood tests
- CT scan of the sinuses
- Visualization of the airway by an ENT using a scope
Treatment of the cough will depend on the cause and include but are not limited to:
- GERD: Proton pump inhibitors such as pantoprazole or omeprazole to reduce acid reflux
- Post nasal drip: nasal spray such as fluticasone (Flonase)
- Cough suppressants
- Bacterial infection: Antibiotics
- Flu: Tamiflu if symptoms started less then 72 hours of treatment

References: