

# Phlegm is not pleasant

The positive aspect is that by coughing up phlegm, **irritants** such as **dust** and pollen, and **mucous** caused by the common cold may be removed from the **throat** and the upper **airways**.

**T**he causes range from allergies to **whooping cough**. The main function of coughing is to remove **foreign substances** and secretions from the lungs and thus prevent infection. Coughing is a normal reflex, but if a cough **persists** for several weeks without improvement,

or the phlegm produced is strongly **discoloured** or even bloody, it may indicate a condition that needs medical attention. Here are some of the symptoms that definitely require a visit to the family doctor: if the phlegm is **thick**, greenish or yellow in colour, or if it is bloody; **wheezing** is experienced; a fever over 39 °C; and **shortness** of breath.

**Male pharmacy customer:** Good evening.

PTA: Good evening. What can I do for you?

**I have had a very annoying cough for about three or four days now. My wife keeps telling me to go to my doctor, but I simply don't have the time, which is why I'm here.**

Good. So, what type of cough is it?

**What type of cough? Oh, eh, well it is fairly productive, you know with phlegm and it sounds a bit chesty.**

Is the phlegm coloured?

**No, it's clear and although there is a lot of it, it isn't thick or mucous. What do you recommend?**

Firstly, it's important to keep your throat **moist**. We have these **lozenges** here that are sugar-free and really effective against dry throat. You see if your throat gets dry that

irritates your breathing passages and then leads to this irritating coughing attack. It's also essential to drink **plenty** of **fluids**, especially warm fluids such as tea. This **herbal tea** is 100 % **organically grown** and I personally find it very **soothing**.

**What's in the tea?**

Let's see, **thyme** and **buckhorn**, and a little **liquorice root**.

**That sounds good. Yes, I'll take a packet with me.**

Have you measured your temperature? I mean do you have fever, headache or joint pain?

**No, not really. Why?**

If you had any of these symptoms, or if the phlegm were coloured, I'd send you straight to your GP.

**Really! Why?**

Well, those symptoms would be a sign of an infection that would need medical attention. A lot of people take things like colds and flu lightly, but if left untreated for a longer period, they may become life-threatening, especially in young children and the elderly.

**Don't worry, between you and my wife telling me these things, the first time any of these symptoms come up, I'll go to my doctor immediately!**

Another **household remedy** that I use is **ginger** tea. You need a heaped teaspoon of freshly **grated** ginger in a cup of boiling water. **Let it draw** for about ten minutes, and then it has a drinkable temperature. You can add a little honey to taste. Try and drink this three times a day.

**Sounds very healthy! Thank you for the good advice.**

It is! Here are your purchases.

**Thank you. Goodbye.**

Bye, bye! ■

*Catherine Croghan,  
Lecturer in English and native speaker*

## VOCABULARY

Phlegm	Schleim
irritants	Reizstoffe
dust	Staub
mucous	Schleim, schleimartig
throat	Kehle, Rachen
airways	Atemwege
whooping cough	Keuchhusten, Pertussis
foreign substances	Fremdkörper
to persist	andauern
discoloured	verfärbt
thick	(hier) zäh
wheezing	Keuchen
shortness of breath	Kurzatmigkeit
chesty	Reiz(husten)
moist	feucht
lozenge	Lutschtablette
plenty	viel
fluids	Flüssigkeiten
herbal tea	Kräutertee
organically grown	biologisch angebaut
soothing	wohltuend
thyme	Thymian
buckhorn	Spitzwegerich
liquorice root	Süßholzwurzel
household remedy	Hausmittel
ginger	Ingwer
grated	gerieben
to let something draw	etwas ziehen lassen