

WHAT IS BRONCHIECTASIS?

Bronchiectasis comes from the Greek words “bronchos” (airway) and “ektasis” (widening). This widening of the airways is most commonly caused by the inability to clear mucus from the lungs resulting in chronic infection and damage to the airways.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

The main symptom is a cough producing sputum (mucus). The mucus is often foul smelling and may also contain blood. Other important symptoms include sinusitis/nasal inflammation and fatigue. Less common symptoms include chest pain, shortness of breath and coughing up blood. Head colds can develop easily into pneumonia and many cases have nose and sinus problems.

TESTING FOR BRONCHIECTASIS?

A chest X-ray may be organised by your doctor but may not always show changes suggestive of Bronchiectasis. CT scans may therefore be required to show where in the lung the Bronchiectasis is. Sputum tests can help identify which germs are causing the infections. Lung function testing is often arranged to help monitor the progress of the Bronchiectasis.

TREATMENT OF BRONCHIECTASIS

The main aim of treatment is to clear mucus from the lungs. The majority of cases can be treated effectively with physiotherapy and exercise programs. Bronchodilators and inhaled corticosteroids may be prescribed and may be helpful in controlling the asthma like symptoms that occurs with inflammation.