

## When Does a Cough Become Dangerous?

It's winter and just like cold weather and snow, a common winter visitor is some kind of cough. In most cases coughing is healthy. It is your body's way of clearing your airways of mucus and irritants. For most of us we have just learned to live with a little coughing. The typical cause of a cough is a common cold and most coughs will resolve themselves without treatment in two to three weeks.

But the Mayo Clinic advises that you should see your doctor right away if you or your child are experiencing any of these accompanying symptoms:

- "Coughing up thick, greenish-yellow phlegm
- Wheezing
- Experiencing a fever
- Experiencing shortness of breath
- Experiencing fainting
- Experiencing ankle swelling or weight loss

Seek emergency care if [you are]:

- Choking or vomiting
- Having difficulty breathing or swallowing
- Coughing up bloody or pink-tinged phlegm
- Experiencing chest pain"

"As you get older, it's more likely a winter cough is something bad," says David Beuther, M.D., chief medical information officer at National Jewish Health in Denver, a leading respiratory hospital. The *AARP Bulletin* reports that "[a]fter age 65, there's an increased risk for serious complications from the flu — such as pneumonia, heart inflammation, kidney failure or sepsis. Up to 70 percent of people hospitalized for wintertime flus are 65 and older, and this age group suffers 85 percent of flu-related deaths, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention." However, you can run into these problems at an even younger age.

Another possible cause of coughing is bronchitis. *Medical News Today* says that "Bronchitis occurs when the airways in the lungs become inflamed. Acute



Honey may help loosen a cough, but don't give honey to children younger than one year old..

bronchitis lasts for a few days or weeks but chronic bronchitis can persist for months. Both types of bronchitis cause a cough that brings some mucus up with it. Other symptoms of bronchitis include:

- Sore throat
- Headache
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Body aches
- Fatigue

It is possible to treat most cases of acute bronchitis at home with rest and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs such as ibuprofen. Symptoms that last for longer than a couple of weeks could indicate chronic bronchitis, and this will require a trip to the doctor."

For treating coughs, the Mayo Clinic offers this advice: "Cough medicines usually are used only when cough is an acute condition, causes a lot of discomfort, interferes with sleep and is not associated with any of the potentially worrisome symptoms indicated above.

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If you use cough medicine, be sure to follow the dosing instructions.

Over-the-counter cough and cold medicines are intended to treat the symptoms of coughs and colds, not the underlying disease. Research suggests that these medicines haven't been proved to work any better than inactive medicine (placebo). More important, these medications have potentially serious side effects, including fatal overdoses in children younger than 2 years old. Don't use over-the-counter medicines, except for fever reducers and pain relievers, to treat coughs and colds in children younger than 6 years old. Also, consider avoiding use of these medicines for children younger than 12 years old. To ease your cough, try these tips:

- Suck cough drops or hard candies. They may ease a dry cough and soothe an irritated throat. Don't give them to a child under age 6, however, because of the risk of choking.
- Consider taking honey. A teaspoon of honey may help loosen a cough. Don't give honey to children younger than 1 year old because honey can contain bacteria harmful to infants.
- Moisturize the air. Use a cool mist humidifier or take a steamy shower.
- Drink fluids. Liquid helps thin the mucus in your throat. Warm liquids, such as broth tea or lemon juice, can soothe your throat.
  - Avoid tobacco smoke."

## Commissary, Military Service Exchange, and MWR Access Extended to More Veterans

Starting January 1, more veterans and primary family caregivers will be eligible to shop at military commissaries, base exchanges and will be able to access services at morale, welfare and recreation (MWR) facilities both in-person and online. A recently enacted law extends these privileges to Purple Heart recipients, former prisoners of war and disabled veterans with 0-90% service-connected disability ratings. (Medal of Honor recipients and veterans with 100% service-connected disability ratings are already eligible under existing Department of Defense policy.)



Veterans and Primary Family Caregivers who are eligible and want to take advantage of in-person

benefits must have a Veterans Health Identification Card, or VHIC. Primary Family Caregivers must have an eligibility letter from VA's Office of Community Care.

To receive a VHIC you must be enrolled in the VA health care system. You can complete an enrollment application online at [www.va.gov/healthbenefits/](http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/) enroll or over the telephone by calling call 1-877-222-VETS (8387) Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. until 7 p.m. Central Time.



## Comfort Food

From the kitchen of Janet Cuddigan

### Savory Black-eyed Peas

An old southern tradition says eating black-eyed peas on the first day of the new year will bring you good luck.

1 pound dry black-eyed peas  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
1 large yellow onion, diced  
2 cloves garlic, minced  
2 (32 ounce) cartons chicken broth  
8 cups water  
1 pound smoked ham hocks  
5 pepperoncini peppers  
1 bay leaf  
1/2 teaspoon garlic powder  
1/4 teaspoon ground thyme  
Salt and pepper to taste

Place the black-eyed peas into a large container and cover with several inches of cool water; let stand 8 hours to overnight. Drain and rinse before using. In a large stock pot over medium heat, cook and stir onion and garlic in olive oil until onion becomes translucent, about 5 minutes. Pour in the chicken broth and 8 cups water, bring to a boil, and reduce heat to a simmer. Stir in soaked black-eyed peas, ham hocks, tomatoes, pepperoncini, bay leaf, garlic powder, thyme, and salt and pepper. Cover and simmer until peas are tender—about 3 hours.

Adapted from allrecipes.com

## 5 Great Tips for Keeping Your Resolutions This Year



If you are making New Year's resolutions, you may not know that you are participating in a 4,000 year old tradition. The ancient Babylonians rang in the New Year with an 11-day festival when they made promises to the gods hoping that their deities would favor them in the coming year. While it is not known how many Babylonians lived up to their New Year's promises, in the modern world we know that we struggle to keep our resolutions for more than few weeks.

You can improve your odds by following these simple tips:

1. **Keep your resolutions simple.** Don't try to overhaul your entire life. Pick one to three of your most important goals for 2020.
2. **Break your goals down into manageable and specific chunks.** Rather than just pledging to be healthier instead say "I'm going to lose 10 pounds", or "I'll workout at the gym three times a week."
3. **Enlist help and support.** Share your resolutions to those around you who are close to you. Their encouragement will help bolster your resolve.
4. **Don't wait until 11:59 p.m. on New Year's Eve.** To reach any goal it takes some planning. If you devote some time to thinking about your resolutions and how you to achieve your goals, you will have a leg up.
5. **Write them down.** You stand a better chance of succeeding if you not only put your goals down on a written page, but if you make a list of how you might achieve your resolutions and what obstacles might stand in your way.



## Brain Teaser

A man stands on one side of a river, his dog on the other. The man calls his dog, who immediately crosses the river without getting wet and without using a bridge or a boat. How did the dog do it?



For the puzzle solution go to [cuddiganlaw.com/library/newsletter](http://cuddiganlaw.com/library/newsletter)

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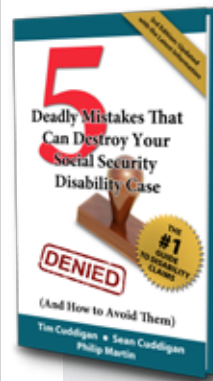
Sean & Tim Cuddigan

Subscribe to the Cuddigan Law YouTube channel to view our free library of videos about Social Security and VA disability. You will find a full range of information about qualifying medical disorders, how-to tips on navigating the system, and insider advice on winning your claim.



"5 Deadly Mistakes That Can Destroy Your Social Security Disability Case" is the #1 guide to improving the odds of winning a disability case.

For a FREE copy for you or someone you care about call Cuddigan Law at 402.933.5318 or email us at [lawteam@cuddiganlaw.com](mailto:lawteam@cuddiganlaw.com)



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