

Duncan - Flu (21.12.17)

D - Come in.

P - Morning.

D - Morning, Duncan, morning, take yourself a seat.

P - Right then.

D - Thank you.

P - Monday I was cold, couldn't get warm. Shivering.

P - Yeah. Tuesday, nose blocked up, coughing all the time, my throat's sore. Last night, woke up, perspiration all over, soaking wet - aches and pains.

D - Okay, okay. Anything else?

P - No, that's about it. Is it?

Wife - No, that's about it.

P - Yeah, coughing all the time, my throat's sore now, like, you know. But, it's changing now into a tickly cough, I want to cough, but before, I could feel phlegm coming up, you know.

D - Got you. So, your symptoms started on Monday this week?

P - Cold, yes, aye they did, suddenly for some reason.

D - Started as a cold, been sweaty and shivery with it?

P - No, started as a cold and I've been going to bed and - but last night I took a couple of paracetamols, for some reason my thighs, here, were aching, I couldn't - so I took a couple of paracetamol and at two o'clock in the morning my wife says, 'you were lying there with beads of sweat', you know.

D - Got you. All right, so it's mostly about your chest, but you're achy all over as well?

P - Yeah, aye.

D - And it started on Monday?

P - Started on Monday, yeah.

D - Aside from your chest and your aches, was there anything that you wanted me to address today?

P - No.

D - Was it just that?

P - Yeah.

D - What do you think is behind all of this?

P - I think what it is, I think it's the flu. I've had it two or three times and it always starts off with a cold. I can remember one year, sitting in front of the gas fire, like, freezing, which is stupid, but that's what it was - as I say, I was sitting, you know I'm in a warm house but I'm cold like that. You know, it starts off like that, and it generally deteriorates into this then goes away, but this is a week now, like you know.

D - So, a couple of years ago you had the flu. I noticed from looking back on your records that you saw Dr Coyne, and that was, what, a couple of months ago with a chest infection.

P - Yes that's right, I couldn't get the phlegm up, yeah.

D - Okay, that was better, and you had no symptoms for at least a month before coming back with this?

P - That's right, yeah.

D - Generally speaking, how is your chest usually?

P - Okay, no bother.

D - You're not prone to chest problems?

P - No, no.

D - You're not a smoker?

P - No, I packed in, I packed in.

D - Oh well done, when did you stop?

P - Five year ago, six year ago.

D - Excellent, okay, and your general health up until now?

P - Okay, champion.

D - Has there been any other issues at all?

P - No, nothing.

D - I've noticed you use a walking stick.

P - Yeah, that was a motorbike accident fifty years ago.

D - Yeah, okay. But you get about alright?

P - Oh, yeah, yeah.

D - And domestically, you live with your wife.

P - Yes.

D - You're not a big drinker or anything like that?

P - I drink on a weekend, but it's not a big deal, not a big deal. I'm only drinking sugar, isn't it, that's why I've got this, with drinking.

D - Well, we can talk about that, if you'd like.

P - Oh no, no.

D - In terms of your alcohol consumption, how many pints would you drink in an average week?

P - Friday night, I'll probably have four, Sunday night, I'll probably have about five.

D - Okay so total of nine pints in a week, and if you're concerned about that and think it's something worth addressing, we'll come back to that.

P - Oh no, no.

D - Mostly here about your chest, then.

P - As I say, when it comes to drinking in the house, I couldn't thank you for it, it's just social drinking.

D - Alright, alright. Good, so you're thinking probably flu, was there anything that was on your mind that you were worried about?

P - No, no worries at all.

D - Can I check you've not been coughing up any blood?

P - No blood, no.

D - Do you feel breathless with it?

P - Sometimes I feel a bit breathless, but I don't get much exercise, so if I'm walking up the stairs with a cup of tea, I get a bit—you know, but I'm okay.

D - Is that normal for you?

P - It is normal for me.

D - So that's not really changed a great deal; so no more breathless than usual?

P - No, no.

D - And your weight's been steady?

P - No, it goes up and down like a yo-yo. Sometimes I'll starve myself and have a lovely tea and then have a bit snacks and I'm up to 13 stone.

D - Okay, we're not thinking...

P - Sorry, 16 stone.

D - We're not thinking that could be anything particularly nasty about this?

P - No, no, not at all.

D - Alright.

P - I think it's - I've just got the flu.

D - Alright.

P - So do you think just some antibiotics, or what?

D - Well, we'll make a choice between us as to what the options are for you. If it is truly flu, maybe antibiotics wouldn't be suitable, but we could think about that.

P - Yeah.

D - What colour's your spit at the moment?

P - My spit?

D - Yeah.

P - It's... what I've got coming up my nose is a very light yellow, a very light yellow.

D - Okay.

P - I've known it to be very dark green.

D - Okay. Would you mind slipping your jumper and your jacket off for me, and then we'll check you over. Was there anything else that you were particularly wanting me to do, except for considering antibiotics?

P - No.

D - Not really, right. Because you're not here on your own, I'm also going to ask your wife what she would like me to do for you?

P - Well, she's here with the same symptoms.

D - Exactly. We've talked about her symptoms. Do you want to—if you turn yourself round we're going to listen to the back of your chest, if that's okay. Breathe away. Lovely. No pain in your face at all?

P - No.

D - You're not wheezy at all?

P - Well, just with this chest at the moment.

D - Just your chest? You've never had asthma before?

P - No, never.

D - With you being an ex-smoker, would you mind doing this blowing test for me?

P - Oh yeah.

D - Deep breath in, and blow hard and fast. You're going to put your lips right around the outside of that pipe and blow hard. Good numbers, so 420, that's really good. Take yourself a seat, and I'm going to check your temperature and your oxygen levels. We'll get you to put yourself back together in a second. So, on your finger there if you wouldn't mind, and that's going to check your temperature. Your temperature's good, your oxygen levels are good, your pulse is normal. Okay, pop your jumper back on.

Wife - His chest through the night was like a cat crying.

P - Yes.

D - So, I think that this is a flu-like illness.

P - Yes.

D - I think you're absolutely right. Your chest is okay at the moment, and you're coughing up some yellowy-green phlegm at the moment.

P - Yeah, very light, very light it is.

D - So, antibiotics don't usually help at this stage of an illness to be fair, under most circumstances, but there are circumstances where we would think of antibiotics for you.

P - Oh, I'm not pressuring you.

D - No, absolutely, and I know that you weren't expecting antibiotics, but the government is encouraging me to offer people who've got flu-like illnesses at this time of year an anti-viral treatment that you can take. But, it gives you very marginal benefits, so it might draw the end of the illness by about half a day. So, marginal benefits. So, it's worthwhile taking symptomatic treatment to help you with the fever, so we're talking about things like paracetamol. Have you ever used ibuprofen?

P - No.

D - You're not prone to ulcers in your stomach?

P - No.

D - And you don't have high blood pressure or anything like that?

P - No.

D - So, ibuprofen you could use, and it's more effective for a fever, but it is slightly more risky for the stomach, so you might want to stick to paracetamol in the first instance. So, 2 tablets of paracetamol four times a day, which your wife has been using, and that will help control your fever. From the point of view of 'do you need antibiotics or not', well, what I would suggest you think about is that we give you antibiotics if your temperature is persistently high and your

coughing up a lot of coloured spit and your chest is getting worse. So, maybe we should be thinking about that if you're continuing to be poorly. Now, most people with a flu-like illness will find that the first two days are the worst, you have a fever that comes and goes, but will generally improve, but the cough will stay with you for two or three weeks.

P - Yeah, yeah.

D - So, what you could do is I could give you a rescue course of antibiotics and if you're finding that you've got a persistent fever - and I'm partially suggesting this because you had a chest infection two months ago. If you're finding you've got a persistent fever that's not improved after two or three days, you might choose to take the antibiotics. Is it worthwhile me giving you some of those? Are there any antibiotics that don't suit you?

P - I'll put it this way, I do feel an improvement this morning - the wife dragged me here, my wife dragged me. As I say, I felt an improvement this morning - not much, but the cough now is ticklish rather than rasping.

D - I don't think you need antibiotics at this stage, but with it being Christmas coming up, you may find it difficult to access a doctor if you were getting worse, then I could give you some standby antibiotics, and you don't cash them in. You could always access a chemist over the weekend and then you could cash in the prescription in and when you needed it. Would that be helpful to you?

P - That would be very, yes.

D - So, these antibiotics need to be taken after food, all right? I can't give you amoxicillin, because amoxicillin is not the most effective after a flu-like illness if it goes to your chest.

P - Yeah.

D - So we would give you something like doxycycline, and doxycycline needs to be taken after food and you need to drink plenty with it, but don't lie down straight after taking it. Okay?

P - Okay then. As I say, I'm not the one for wanting antibiotics, I just wondered if they would help.

D - All antibiotics have a potential for causing diarrhoea, and we usually recommend that when taking an antibiotic, you think about using a probiotic at the same time. That could be a capsule from a health food shop, or it could be a probiotic yoghurt if you prefer. You've got those options.

P - So if I was to—if I keep warm.

D - Yep.

P - Drink a lot.

D - Drink plenty of fluids, eat. But if you're poorly with this, you've got a persistent fever, then it would be reasonable to use the antibiotics, and if you're getting worse we should see you urgently. Does that all make sense?

P - Fine, fine. Great.

D - So, I agree with you, I think you've got flu.

P - Flu.

D - And I'll give you a standby prescription of a tablet called doxycycline, which is an antibiotic, but I'll ask you not to cash it in. Do you have any questions?

Wife - No, that sounds good. Last night I thought he was truly ill.

D - Yeah, well it sounds like you had a rough time last night, doesn't it? If you have persistent chest symptoms, we ought to do a chest x-ray, which is one of the things that Dr Coyne talked about, last time she saw you.

P - Yeah.

D - But I think that at the moment, there's probably no need to do that.

P - I was a smoker for 50 years and coughing up phlegm was a normal thing for a smoker, you know, and I finished with it and I stopped coughing up phlegm. I thought this is brilliant this, and then it's come back again slightly, you know.

D - Well you might be prone, in the winter times, to having a bit of bronchitis, but if you've got persistent symptoms then we ought to think about doing a chest x-ray, doing a blowing test - a special blowing test. The blowing test that you did today is slightly different to the one I'd recommend if you're having continued problems in the winter. So, don't cash this one in - cash it in, just check with the girls at the front desk and they'll tell you what pharmacies are open over the Christmas period.

P - Thanks very much, much obliged.

Wife - Thank you very much.

D - Wish you a speedy recovery.

P - Bye.

D - Take care guys.