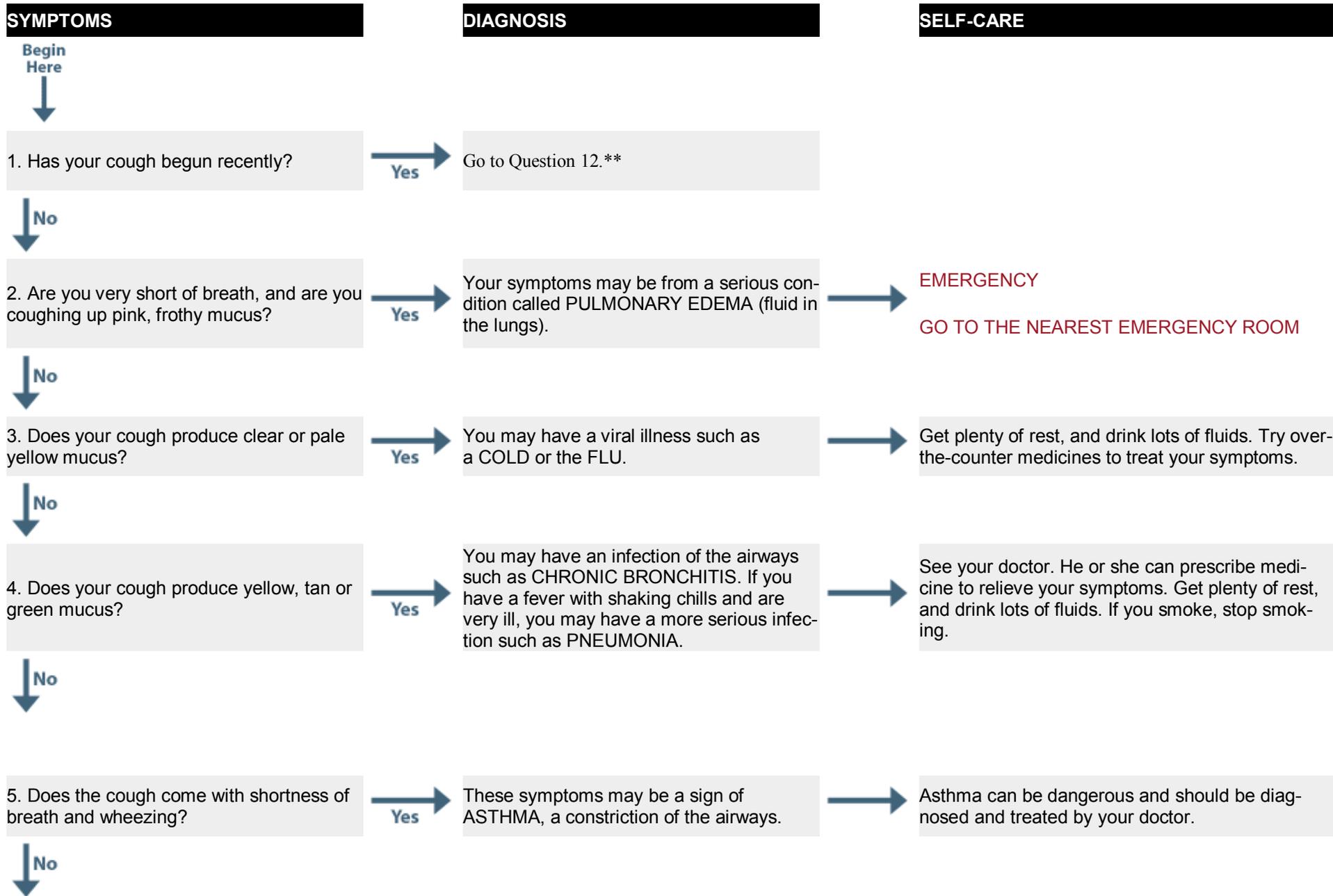


Cough

A cough is an annoying symptom that can have many causes. Follow this chart to help identify your problem and find suggestions for self-care.



6. Do you have swelling in your legs and/or shortness of breath when you are active or after you have been lying down?

No

Go to Question 10.*

Yes

7. Do you have heart problems?

Yes

Persistent coughing can be caused by CONGESTIVE HEART FAILURE, especially when there is a buildup of fluid in the lungs.

See your doctor.

No

8. Have you recently started coughing up blood or bloody sputum?

No

Go to Question 12.**

Yes

9. Have you recently started having sharp chest pain, rapid heartbeat, swelling of the legs and sudden shortness of breath?

Yes

Bloody mucus with these symptoms may mean that a blood clot has moved from your leg to your lungs. This is called PULMONARY EMBOLISM.

**EMERGENCY
SEE YOUR DOCTOR RIGHT AWAY.**

No

*10. Do you have a fever, chills and night sweats along with chest pain when you cough or take a deep breath?

Yes

These symptoms may be caused by TUBERCULOSIS or another type of infection.

See your doctor.

No

11. Have you unintentionally lost weight?

Yes

This may be a sign of a serious illness, such as LUNG CANCER. Other signs of lung cancer may include a cough that produces bloody sputum, shortness of breath and wheezing.

See your doctor right away.

No

**12. Did you inhale dust, particles or an object?

Yes

IRRITATION OF THE AIRWAYS will cause coughing to attempt to clear the object or irritation out of the airway.

If the coughing is severe or if you don't believe the irritant has been cleared from your airway, see your doctor or go to the emergency room right

No

This tool has been reviewed by doctors and is for general educational purposes only. It is not a substitute for medical advice. The information in this tool should not be relied upon to make decisions about your health. Always consult your family doctor with questions about your individual condition(s) and/or circumstances. Source: American Academy of Family Physicians. Family Health & Medical Guide. Dallas: Word Publishing; 1996.