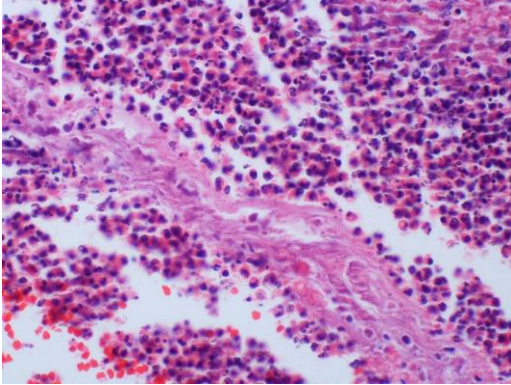


## 15 Most-Googleed health questions in New York

### No. 1: Is pneumonia contagious?



"Pneumonia can be contagious depending on the amount and type of exposure and the patient's innate defenses," said Mensch.

Even though the lungs are constantly exposed to pathogens in the environment, most people won't develop pneumonia from them, he said.

Others may also have a defect in their defenses, like a decreased level of consciousness, exposure to tobacco smoke, alcohol consumption, toxic inhalations and malnutrition, Mensch said.

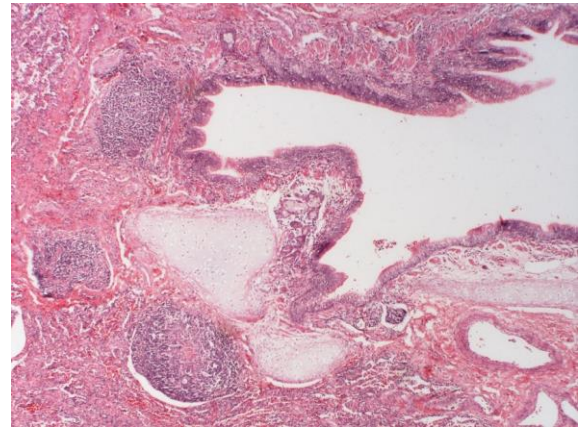
However, even people with normal defenses can develop pneumonia if they are exposed to strong organisms or a large inoculum from someone who is infected, he said.

### No. 2: Is bronchitis contagious?

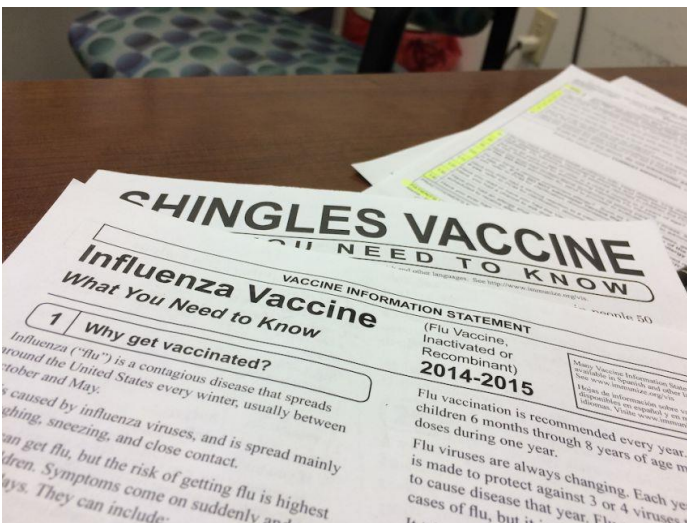
Mensch said bronchitis can be described as both acute and chronic.

Acute bronchitis tends to stem from a virus, he said. A person's innate host defenses and the strength of the inhaled microorganisms will impact how easily someone can catch it.

"Chronic bronchitis, however, is often seen in smokers and is due to microscopic changes in the lining of the bronchial tree," he said. This type of bronchitis is not contagious.



### No. 3: Is shingles contagious?



Shingles is caused by herpes varicella virus, which also causes chicken pox. People often catch the virus early in life and it tends to remain dormant in the body's nerve routes, Mensch said. As you age, the virus can reactivate along your nerve routes, which results in shingles.

"Shingles itself is not contagious and cannot cause another patient to develop shingles," Mensch said. "However, if another individual has not previously been exposed to the varicella virus or they're immune-suppressed, it is possible that exposure to the shingles lesions may cause an exposed individual to develop chicken pox."

This is why lesions from shingles should be covered to prevent passing the virus on to those who are most vulnerable.

## No. 4: How long does the flu last?

For patients whose flu is uncomplicated, their illness will usually last 5 to 7 days, Mensch said. In some cases, it can last more than a week.

"Following influenza, patients have several weeks of fatigue until they fully recover," Mensch said.

"Patients are generally considered contagious up to 7 days after symptoms develop and occasionally up to a week."



## No. 5: How to lower blood pressure?

(What causes high blood pressure came in at No. 14)



"For the vast majority of people with high blood pressure, a cause cannot be determined," which is often called "essential hypertension," Mensch said.

While they aren't identified as actual causes, certain conditions and habits are often associated with high blood pressure and could play a role in its development, Mensch said. Smoking, excessive drinking, and high salt intake, along with older age, sleep apnea, stress and kidney and thyroid diseases are among these connections. Hereditary factors can also play a role, he said.

"The ideal way to lower [blood pressure] to acceptable values is through healthy lifestyle changes "like weight loss, exercise and dietary modifications, Mensch said. Some eating changes can include simply limiting salt intake, or following the DASH diet, which emphasizes vegetables, fruits, fat-free or low-fat dairy products, whole grains, fish, poultry, beans, seeds, nuts, and vegetable oils while limiting sodium, sweets, sugary beverages, and red meats, he said.

"If weight loss, exercise and diet changes are ineffective, there are several medications which can be used to lower blood pressure," he said. "Many patients require two or more drugs for adequate control."

## No. 6: What is HPV?

Human Papillomavirus, the most common sexually transmitted infection in the country, is transmitted through intimate genital contact, Mensch said.

The virus, commonly known as HPV, is mostly asymptomatic and self-limited, he said. In rare instances, however, it can lead to genital warts and cervical cancer. The HPV vaccine has been developed and can be administered to pre-teens, teenagers and young adults of all genders to prevent those complications.



## No. 7: How to stop snoring?



"Snoring is caused by the vibration of upper-airway tissues while breathing during sleep," Mensch said.

"Many things can lead to snoring, including sleeping on one's back with the tongue falling to the back of the throat, nasal obstruction, obesity and obstructive sleep apnea."

No single treatment has been proven to stop snoring once and for all. However, there are a few ways to target some of the causes.

"If there is any obstruction in the upper airway passage, snoring can be stopped by clearing that obstruction," Mensch said.

Antihistamines may help to treat allergies; however they are not entirely effective in stopping snoring.

Losing weight, which decreases fatty tissue in the upper airways, quitting smoking, avoiding sedatives and sleeping on one's side can also help decrease snoring, Mensch said.

Some over-the-counter sprays, nasal strips and anti-snoring bedding may help, but Mensch said "there is no scientific evidence to prove their effectiveness."

In some cases, snoring can indicate a potentially serious condition called sleep apnea. "Patients with sleep apnea experience loud snoring alternating with apneic (non-breathing) periods," Mensch said. "As sleep apnea can lead to serious side effects, it is important to seek treatment which may include a sleep apnea mask overnight."

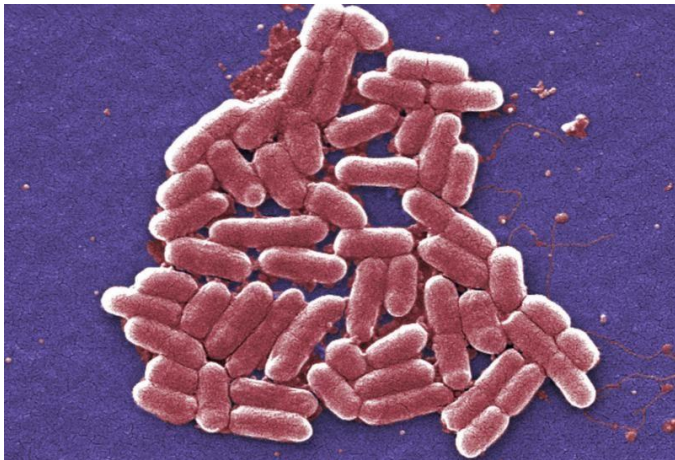
## No. 8: What causes hiccups?

"Hiccups are involuntary contractions of the diaphragm, the muscle below the lungs," Mensch said. "The contraction causes the vocal chords to snap shut, resulting in a typical hiccup sound."

Hiccups are most commonly self-limited and will go away without treatment, Mensch said. However, they can last for an extended period of time, and may be treated with medication or surgical procedures in more severe cases. Some say spicy food, like these chili peppers, which can cause heartburn or acid reflux, has also been linked to hiccups.



## No. 9: What is sepsis?



When someone has an infection, usually with bacteria, the body's reaction is to target its defenses against that invading organism, explained Mensch.

"Occasionally the immune system overreacts resulting in the immune system attacking healthy organs. This can lead to organ failure and rarely death," he said.

Since untreated infections can sometimes lead to sepsis, it is important to diagnose and treat them as soon as possible, he said.

## No. 10: How do I lower my cholesterol?

Cholesterol, a fat-like substance found in nearly all our cells, helps make Vitamin D, hormones and substances that can aid digestion, Mensch said.

Cholesterol comes in two forms: High Density Lipoprotein, or HDL, and Low Density Lipoprotein, or LDL.

"People with high HDL have protection against heart disease while a lower HDL makes individuals more susceptible," Mensch said. "The opposite is true with LDL. When one's LDL is high, there is increased risk for arteriosclerotic and cardiovascular disease. Therefore it is important to lower one's LDL."



Mensch said there are two basic ways to lower LDL. "The first is through lifestyle changes, including weight loss and a healthy diet avoiding cholesterol rich foods. If unsuccessful there are several medication classes that are effective in lowering harmful LDL cholesterol and cardiovascular risk."

## No. 11: How do you stop diarrhea?



"Diarrhea is a condition where feces are discharged from the body in a liquid and frequent matter," Mensch said. It can stop on its own, which is most common, or it can persist, he said.

"During bouts of diarrhea, it is important to remain well hydrated, as one can lose a lot of fluid during diarrheal illness," Mensch said, adding "it may be helpful to avoid fatty and sugary foods and those containing fructose and lactose."

Over-the-counter medications like Pepto-Bismol and Imodium can be used to stop diarrhea. However, "their use is controversial as some believe that using these agents theoretically could prolong diarrhea by decreasing the rate of removal of pathogens," Mensch said.

In some cases, diarrhea can be caused by bacteria like C-Difficile and Salmonella, which require antibiotics to treat, Mensch said.

## No. 12: What causes kidney stones?

"Kidney stones can be caused by hereditary factors or certain conditions, such as gout ... which cause high calcium levels such as hyperparathyroidism," said Mensch.

When you're dehydrated, he added, you increase the risk of developing the stones.



## No. 13: How many calories should I eat a day?



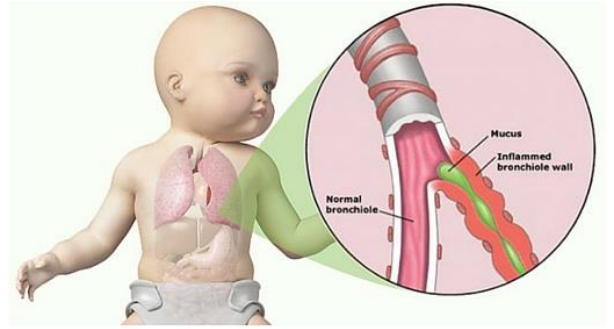
A calorie is a simply a unit of measurement for energy. On average, females need 2,000 calories per day while males need 2,500 calories, he said.

"As human beings, we burn a certain amount of calories a day in our daily activities," Mensch said.

"The calories we expend must be replaced by ingesting an equal number of calories. If we consume excess calories they are stored as fat."

## No. 14: Is bronchiolitis contagious?

Yes. Caused by an infection that affects small airways leading to the lungs, bronchiolitis is most often found in infants and young children. It's spread by germs in the tiny drops of fluid from an infected person's nose and mouth, which are airborne when someone laughs, sneezes, or coughs, according to The Nemours Foundation.



## No. 15: What is lupus?

Lupus is an autoimmune disease in the same family as rheumatoid arthritis and psoriatic arthritis.

"In Lupus, a body's immune system will inappropriately attack healthy tissues in the body," Mensch said.

"Therefore, Lupus can affect almost any organ in the body, including the kidneys, red blood cells, joints, lungs and the brain."

While Lupus is often treated successfully with immunosuppressive agents, he said, those medications decrease the patient's own immune system activity, which can make them more susceptible to infections

