

Pneumonia

Pneumonia

Pneumonia is an infection of the lungs. It can be caused by germs (bacteria or virus) or even by a fungus.

Pneumonia sometimes follows a cold and settles into the lungs. Medicines will treat pneumonia caused by bacteria or fungus, but not by a virus.

Signs of Pneumonia

Signs of pneumonia include:

- fever and shaking chills, especially if you have other symptoms
- breathing problems, including painful breathing
- coughing with bloody, green or yellow mucus (also called sputum or phlegm)
- body aches.

To confirm that you have pneumonia, your health care provider may do the following:

- order chest X-rays to find out where the pneumonia is located in your lungs
- give you a physical exam
- send a sample of your mucus (sputum) or blood for testing to find out what kind of bacteria may be causing your illness.

Prevent the Spread of Pneumonia

To avoid spreading your illness to others, and to help prevent you from getting pneumonia again:

- Cover your mouth and nose during coughing and sneezing. The germ can spread through the air in tiny droplets of moisture from an infected person's coughing or sneezing.
- Use tissues to wipe your mouth or nose. Throw away the tissues and wash your hands well.
- **Wash your hands often to reduce the risk of spreading or catching the illness.** Your hands come in contact with germs that can cause pneumonia.
- Stay healthy and keep your body's natural defense against illness strong.
 - Eat a balanced diet, get enough rest and get regular exercise.
 - Avoid being around ill people whenever possible.
- Ask your doctor about getting a pneumonia vaccine (shot). Even if you have had a pneumonia shot, you may need another one. (This only covers one bacterium that causes pneumonia.)

Foods and Beverages

- Drink at least 6 to 8 glasses of liquid a day to help thin the mucus. Water is a good choice.
- Follow your doctor's directions if you have a special fluid restriction.
- Do not drink alcohol while being treated.

Activity

- It is important to be as active as your health allows. Be up and moving around as much as possible, unless your doctor tells you otherwise. If you are in bed, change your position often.
- Slowly increase your activity. Limit activities that increase shortness of breath or cause you to cough.
- Take slow, deep breaths and cough 5 to 6 times every hour while you are awake. When you take deep breaths, hold your breath for 2 to 3 seconds. Push the air out with a deep, strong cough.
- If you are congested or have mucus, spit it out.

Medicines

- Take all medicine(s) as directed by your doctor.
- If you are taking antibiotics, take them all until they are gone, even if you feel better. If you do not finish taking all of your antibiotics, you are at risk for getting pneumonia again.
- Never stop taking a medicine without checking with your doctor.
- If you are taking prescription pain medicine, it may make you drowsy. Do not drive or operate machinery.

Do Not Use Tobacco

- Using any form of tobacco, including electronic nicotine delivery systems, makes it harder for your body to recover from pneumonia.
- If you need help quitting, talk with your doctor, visit smokefree.gov, or call the tobacco intervention program at:
 - Abbott Northwestern Hospital (612-863-1648)
 - Mercy Hospital (763-236-8008)
 - River Falls Area Hospital (715-307-6075).

Follow-up Appointment

Keep the follow-up appointment with your health care provider as scheduled. It is important to go even if you are feeling better.

When To Call Your Health Care Provider

Call your health care provider right away if you have any of the following:

- a temperature higher than 101.5 F
- chills
- increased chest pain
- nausea, vomiting or diarrhea that lasts longer than 24 hours
- bloody or pink, frothy mucus
- itchy, swollen, reddened skin
- breathing difficulties
- severe headache with a stiff neck
- any worsening symptoms.

When To Call 911

Call 911 if you can't talk, have blue lips or if your breathing doesn't get better.