

Community Acquired Pneumonia

Client Education Booklet

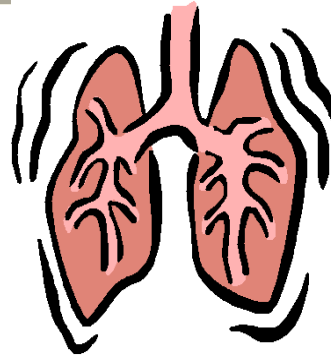
“Client” means patient/client/resident

What is Pneumonia?

Pneumonia is an inflammation of the lungs caused by infection.

What Pneumonia does

When you have pneumonia your lungs are inflamed or infected. The air spaces fill with pus and other liquids, so oxygen can't reach your blood. Lack of oxygen makes you short of breath because your body cells and organs can't work properly.



Causes of Pneumonia:

- Bacteria
- Viruses
- Mycoplasma (unusual bacteria)

Symptoms may include:

- Fever
- Chills
- Weakness
- Muscle aches
- Chest pain
- Tiredness
- Shortness of breath
- Poor appetite

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Diagnosing the Problem:

If You Seem to Have Symptoms of Pneumonia;

- Call your physician/ nurse practitioner immediately. Even with the many effective medications that exist, finding and treating pneumonia early is important. If necessary visit your local Emergency Department for assessment.
- Follow your physician/ nurse practitioner's advice. If he/she says you should be in the hospital, go there. If he/she says you should rest at home, do it.
- Continue taking the medicine your physician/ nurse practitioner prescribes until the prescription is finished. If you stop the medication too soon, the pneumonia may come back.

To diagnose pneumonia and find the right treatment, your health care provider may order some tests:

- **Chest X-ray** – This test helps us find the pneumonia and how severe it is. If you think you may be pregnant please notify the x-ray technician before your x-ray.
- **Sputum testing** – Sputum is mucous coughed up from the throat or lungs. A sample of this may help to tell us what type of pneumonia you have and which medications will work best for you.

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- **White blood Cell (WBC) Count and Differential** – This test tells us if you have any infection in your body, and helps the health care provider monitor your response to treatment.
- **Blood Cultures** – These can detect whether the pneumonia bacteria is in your bloodstream.
- **“O₂ Saturation”** – A clip on your finger measures how much oxygen is getting to your body.

You might see one or more of the following professionals:

- Physician / Nurse Practitioner
- Respiratory Therapist
- Lab Technologist
- Diagnostic Imaging Technologist
- Physiotherapist
- Pharmacist
- Discharge Planner

If you are seen in Emergency department or admitted to hospital you MAY be in isolation for the first 24 hours, which means any visitors or care givers will wear a mask and protective clothing to prevent the spread of germs.

Treatment of Pneumonia

The medications used to treat the different kinds of pneumonia are chosen based on the kind of germ causing it and the severity of your symptoms. It is important to provide the physician / nurse practitioner with a complete list of all medications, prescription, over the counter and herbal that you are taking. The medications must be taken according to directions or the pneumonia may not be adequately treated.

Depending on the severity of your pneumonia and underlying conditions your physician / nurse practitioner may decide you can recover at home or may need to be admitted to hospital for treatment.

Medications and Treatments may include:

- **Antibiotics**- These kill the infecting germ and must be taken until finished or the pneumonia may re occur
- **Bronchodilators** – These may be used to reduce wheezing, especially if you have an underlying lung condition such as asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Often these are inhalers or puffers.
- **Prednisone**- Steroid used to reduce inflammation, especially if you have an underlying lung condition such as asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).
- **Oxygen** – May be prescribed to relieve shortness of breath.

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- **Pain Relief** – Pain and discomfort from coughing may stop you from coughing and breathing effectively. In order to help you cough and breath without pain, your physician / nurse practitioner may prescribe a mild pain reliever. Medication may also be prescribed to relieve your fever.
- **Proper Diet** – It is important to be well nourished to fight the infections, and to drink lots of fluids to hasten your recovery.

Discharge from Hospital: You may be ready for discharge when:

- Your breathing has improved
- Your fever is down
- You don't need intravenous medication for your pneumonia
- You understand your treatment plans and the importance of following it.

If you feel you need help at home when you are discharged, please tell the nurse about your concerns.

When to Return to Hospital Emergency Room or Physicians / Nurse Practitioners office:

You should start to feel better in 48-72 hours after you have been started on treatment for your pneumonia.

Please return to see your physician / nurse practitioner if the following symptoms occur:

- Continued fever after 72 hours
- Increasing shortage of breath
- Sputum changing color from clear to yellow or green
- Taking fluids poorly
- Generally feeling worse instead of better after 72 hours

Speeding up your recovery

Coughing

A controlled cough is desirable as it acts as a “vacuum cleaning” system for the lungs to get rid of excess mucous. After taking a few deep breaths breathe in slowly through the nose and cough twice with one breath. The first cough will help loosen the mucous in your lungs. The second will help to bring it up and out, getting rid of the mucous.

If you can, sit leaning slightly forward with your feet on the floor to make you're coughing more effective.

When Breathing is Difficult

- Use a position to help with relaxation:
- Make a slope with 3 or 4 pillows, placing an extra pillow to fill the gap between your waist and armpit. Lie high up on these with your whole side supported and your shoulder underneath the top pillow.
- Sit leaning forwards from the hips with a straight back, resting your head, shoulders and arms on the pillow.

In both positions, gradually relax your neck muscles, shoulders and upper chest. Try to breathe quickly with the lower part of your chest and around your waist.

- Stand and lean forward from your hips onto something of the required height. Your back should be straight; your arms spread well apart, and your head resting on your hands.
- Sit and lean forward with a straight back, resting your forearms on your thighs with your wrists relaxed.
- Lean the lower half of your back against a wall with your feet placed 12 inches away. Your shoulder should be relaxed with your arms hanging loosely by your side.

In all positions, breathing should take place around your waist. At first, breathing in and out should be of equal duration, and if necessary, more quickly than normal, slowing down as relaxation is achieved.

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Don't Rush Your Recovery

Pneumonia can make you feel very weak and exhausted, it may take a healthy person up to one week to feel better, and others may take several weeks to fully recover. Increase your activity as tolerated. Lots of rest is important in full recovery and to avoid relapse. Listen to your body!

Your physician / nurse practitioner may want to see you in his/her office after your antibiotics are finished. Make an appointment with him/her earlier than this if you have increased shortness of breath, worsening cough, or your fever will not go down.

Prevention is Possible

Some types of pneumonia are preventable by having a vaccine. The greatest risk of pneumonia is among people who:

- Have chronic illness such as lung disease, heart disease, kidney disorders, sickle cell anemia or diabetes;
- Are recovering from a severe illness;
- Are in a nursing home or other chronic care facility;
- Are age 50 or older;
- Have HIV/AIDS.

Your physician / nurse practitioner can help you decide if you, or a member of your family, need the vaccine against pneumonia. It is usually given only to people at an increased risk of getting the disease and the severe

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problems that go with it. It is not recommended for pregnant women or children under age two. Another vaccine that helps reduce your risk of getting pneumonia is the flu vaccine. Often, the flu can progress into pneumonia, and so preventing the flu will also help to stop you from getting pneumonia. Speak with your physician / nurse practitioner if you want more information about either one of these vaccines.

Pneumonia often follows ordinary respiratory infections. It is important when a person has a cold or other infection like bronchitis that they watch any symptoms that go on for more than a few days. Good health habits, such as a *proper diet and hygiene, plenty of rest, and regular exercise*, help prevent all respiratory illnesses. They also help to promote fast recovery if the illnesses do occur.