

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT PNEUMONIA

In the Clinic
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What Is Pneumonia?

Pneumonia is a serious infection of the lungs.

Community-acquired pneumonia is when you develop pneumonia outside a hospital or nursing home. Pneumonia can be caused by bacteria, viruses, or fungi and can range from mild to severe. It is important that pneumonia be identified and treated quickly.

What Are the Symptoms?

- Fever or chills
- A cough that produces a lot of mucus
- Chest pain that is worse with deep breathing
- Shortness of breath
- Feeling tired and weak
- Confusion

What Are the Risk Factors?

- Being age 65 years or older
- Having other health conditions, like diabetes or lung, heart, liver, or kidney disease
- Drinking alcohol
- Smoking cigarettes
- Having the flu or COVID-19
- Having a weakened immune system

Pneumonia can be prevented by quitting smoking and by receiving vaccines. The pneumococcal, influenza, and COVID-19 vaccines have all been shown to prevent pneumonia and its complications.

How Is It Diagnosed?

- Your doctor will take a history; check your vital signs, including your oxygen level; and perform a physical examination.
- You might be given a flu test or a COVID-19 test.
- You might have other tests. A chest x-ray may be helpful to confirm the diagnosis. You may need to have a chest CT scan. Tests of the sputum (the mucus you produce when coughing) or urine may help your doctor learn what type of bacteria is causing your pneumonia. Blood tests may help determine the severity of the infection.



How Is It Treated?

- Treatment depends on how severe your pneumonia is. Your doctor will determine whether you can be treated at home or in the hospital.
- Most patients can be treated at home. Some who are very ill or have a risk for complications might need to stay in the hospital. If you have to stay in the hospital, your doctor will monitor your heart and breathing rates, and you might be given IV fluids or medicine.
- If your pneumonia is caused by bacteria, your doctor will prescribe antibiotics. Symptoms usually start to go away within 2 to 3 days of starting medicine. It is important to finish all of your antibiotics, even if you are feeling better.
- Follow up with your doctor 1 to 2 days after starting antibiotics to make sure you are responding well.
- Drink plenty of fluids and stay hydrated.
- Get plenty of rest. Feeling tired and coughing may last for a month or longer.

Questions for My Doctor

- Should I be treated at home or in the hospital?
- What medicine do I need to take?
- What can I do to help relieve my symptoms?
- When should I have a follow-up visit?
- How can I prevent another episode of pneumonia?

For More Information



American Lung Association
www.lung.org/lung-health-diseases/lung-disease-lookup/pneumonia
MedlinePlus
<https://medlineplus.gov/pneumonia.html>