



Pneumonia is an infection of one or both lungs.

Pneumonia

Pneumonia may be caused by:

- ▶ Bacteria. Pneumococcus, a type of bacteria, causes pneumococcal pneumonia, the most common type of bacterial pneumonia.
- ▶ Viruses. Influenza (flu) virus is one of the most common causes of viral pneumonia.
- ▶ Fungi (rare).
- ▶ Parasites (rare).

How is it spread?

- ▶ When a person with pneumonia sneezes, coughs, talks, or laughs, germs can spread into the air.
- ▶ The germs can spread to people and surfaces up to 6 feet away.
- ▶ Germs can spread to your hands if you touch anything that has the germs on it.
- ▶ If you then touch your eyes, nose or mouth before cleaning your hands, the germs can get into your body and you might get pneumonia.
- ▶ Can occur after contact with germs in your community or during a stay in a healthcare facility.

Who is at risk?

- ▶ Adults age 65 years or older.
- ▶ Persons with certain chronic illnesses or conditions including asthma, diabetes or heart disease.
- ▶ Persons with a weakened immune system.
- ▶ Smokers.
- ▶ Children younger than 5 years of age.

What are signs of pneumonia?

- ▶ Cough (sometimes with thick, creamy, or bloody mucus).
- ▶ Fever.
- ▶ Chills.
- ▶ Tiredness.
- ▶ Confusion.
- ▶ Rapid breathing or shortness of breath.
- ▶ Chest pain.
- ▶ Loss of appetite.
- ▶ Headache.
- ▶ Nausea and vomiting.

How do you know if you have pneumonia?

A health care provider can look for pneumonia by:

- ▶ Asking questions about your symptoms.
- ▶ Listening to your lungs.
- ▶ Taking a chest X-ray.
- ▶ Taking a blood or mucus sample.

More tests may be done if it gets worse or if you have other health problems.



How is it treated?

- ▶ Bacterial pneumonia is treated with antibiotics.
 - ▶ Viral pneumonia can be treated with antiviral drugs.
- Mild cases of pneumonia can be treated at home with medicine and rest. Most severe cases are treated in a hospital. In addition to medicine, oxygen and other methods may be used to support breathing and body functions.

What can happen if pneumonia gets worse?

- ▶ The lungs cannot send enough oxygen to the body.
- ▶ Pus pockets and fluid can form around the lung.
- ▶ Infection can spread to other areas of the body.
- ▶ In severe cases, pneumonia can cause death.

Pneumonia causes about 1 million hospitalizations and about 50,000 deaths a year.

If you have pneumonia:

- ▶ Always finish treatment.
- ▶ Clean your hands often with soap and water or alcohol hand rub.
- ▶ Cough or sneeze into a tissue or into your sleeve.
- ▶ Do not share eating or drinking utensils, hand towels or toothpaste.
- ▶ Do not smoke.
- ▶ Clean surfaces often such as:
 - Countertops.
 - Refrigerator and freezer handles.
 - Doorknobs.
 - Light switches.



For more information on cleaning hands see *Clean Hands* on page 99.

How can you avoid pneumonia?

- ▶ Get vaccinated. Discuss pneumococcal vaccine options with your health care provider.
- ▶ Keep your hands clean with soap and water or alcohol hand rub.
- ▶ Limit or avoid contact with people who are sick.
- ▶ Keep healthy. Eat the right foods and get enough sleep.

Learn more:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

Pneumonia Can Be Prevented - Vaccines Can Help
www.cdc.gov/Features/Pneumonia/

Pneumococcal Vaccination

www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/pneumo/default.htm

Podcasts at CDC: Preventing Pneumonia

www2c.cdc.gov/podcasts/player.asp?f=268703

U.S. National Library of Medicine:

Pneumonia

www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000145.htm