

PATIENT EDUCATION HANDBOOK

Cardiopulmonary Rehab

Pneumonia



Your treatment and recovery



RIVERSIDE

CARDIAC REHABILITATION



PNEUMONIA

TABLE OF CONTENTS

What is Pneumonia? 3

What are the Symptoms of Pneumonia? 4

How is Pneumonia Diagnosed?..... 5

How is Pneumonia Treated?..... 6–8

How Long Does Pneumonia Last and Are There Any
Complications?.....9–10

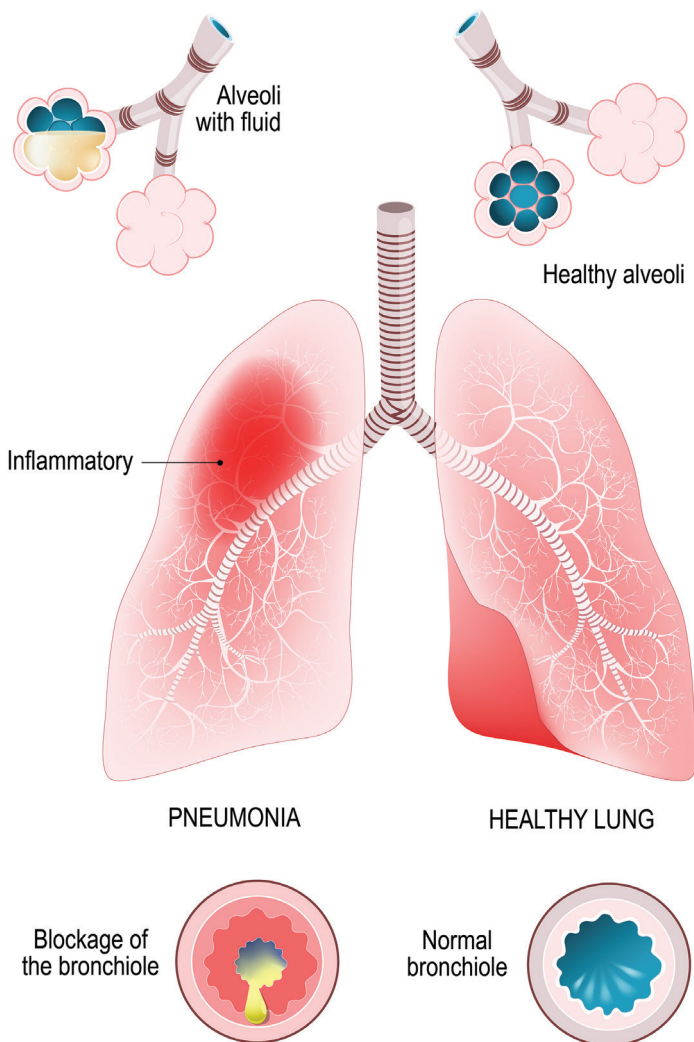
How Can I Prevent Pneumonia? 11–12

Pneumonia Management Guide..... 14–15

Note: *This information is provided to you as an educational service of Riverside Healthcare. It is not meant as a substitute for your own doctor.*

WHAT IS PNEUMONIA?

Pneumonia is an infection of the lungs. Many different organisms cause pneumonia. Most community acquired pneumonias are caused by common bacteria and viruses. Some people may be at a higher risk for developing pneumonia due to their risk of exposure and other conditions. These include people with chronic heart or lung disease, diabetes, immune suppression (either from long term or high dose steroids, immune suppressive medications, or immune diseases), elderly patients, history of a stroke, history of heavy alcohol use, and history of smoking.



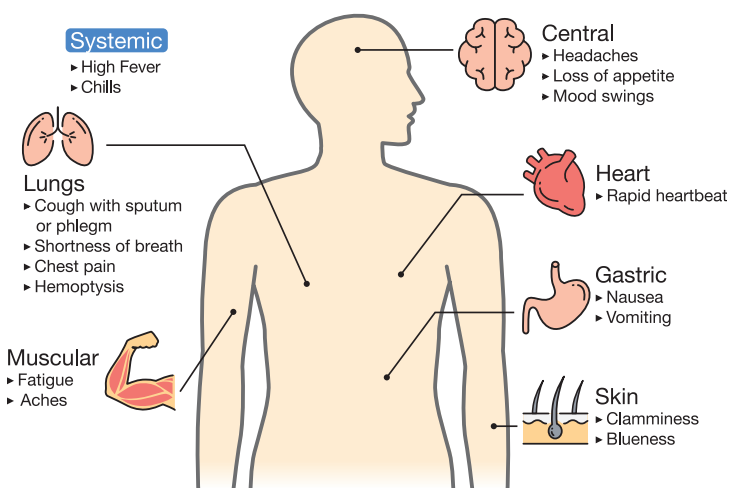
Pneumonia is often acquired by inhaling infected particles or by aspiration ("swallowing" into the lungs). This means that fluids can be introduced into the lungs when you swallow or if you have severe reflux from the esophagus in which the stomach contents can be introduced into the airways. Bacteria can occasionally spread through the bloodstream to infect other parts of the body.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF PNEUMONIA?

Typical symptoms of pneumonia include:

- Cough (with or without sputum)
- Chest pain or discomfort especially when breathing or coughing
- Shortness of breath or fast breathing
- Sore throat
- Fever
- Sweats
- Chills
- Headache
- Muscle aches
- Weakness
- Fatigue
- Confusion

Symptoms of bacterial pneumonias often begin quickly with a cough that produces green or rust colored sputum, fever (often with chills) and pain along the chest wall. Infections caused by mycoplasma and viruses often develop more slowly, often after a few days of flu-like symptoms. They can create a hacking or barking cough, a headache and pain under the breastbone.



HOW IS PNEUMONIA DIAGNOSED?

To diagnose pneumonia, your healthcare provider will take a detailed health history and perform a physical exam. You will also have some tests ordered. These tests can confirm that you have pneumonia and what type you have. Your healthcare provider will work with you to plan treatment.

Health History

Try to answer any questions your healthcare provider may have about your health history. Be sure to mention:

- All of your symptoms and when they first began
- The color and amount of mucus you cough up
- Other health problems you have
- All medications you are taking, including prescription and over-the-counter medications, herbal remedies, and supplements
- Whether you smoke or used to smoke
- The health of others at home
- Any recent trips you have made, particularly overseas

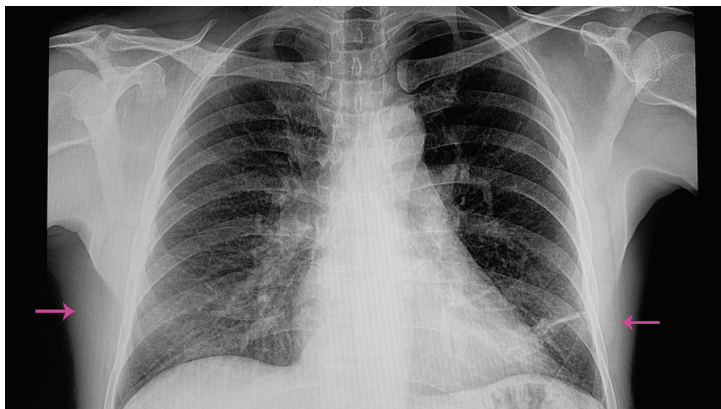


Physical Exam

Your healthcare provider will listen to the front and back of your chest and observe your breathing pattern. You may be asked to cough. Your heart rate, oxygen level, temperature, and blood pressure will also be checked.

Tests You May Have

You will most likely have a chest x-ray. This image of your lungs can show if there is an infection and how severe it is. Blood, urine, and sputum (mucus) tests may also be done to help find out the cause of pneumonia.



HOW IS PNEUMONIA TREATED?

Medications

Pneumonia is most often caused by bacteria. Antibiotics are usually prescribed to help kill bacteria. They must be taken correctly for them to work. Follow these tips when taking them:

- Fill your prescription and start taking the medication right away.
- Take your dose at the same time each day until gone. Do not stop taking the medication, even if you feel better.
- Let your healthcare provider know if you have any side effects that bother you. If needed, they can change the dose or switch you to a different antibiotic.

Antibiotics do not work against viruses. For pneumonia caused by a virus, medications called antivirals are sometimes prescribed instead. You'll be told more about this if needed.



There are many medications that can help relieve symptoms of pneumonia. Some are prescription and some are over-the-counter. Depending on your needs, your healthcare provider may recommend:

- **Acetaminophen or Ibuprofen** – used to lower your fever and to lessen any pain you might be having
- **Cough medication** – expectorant to help loosen mucus. Do not use other cough medication, like cough syrup or suppressant, without talking to your healthcare provider first. In some cases, these can make symptoms worse.
- **Inhaled medications** – breathing treatments or inhalers to open the airways to improve breathing
- **Oxygen** – used to improve breathing and keep safe oxygen levels for your body

Hospitalization

If the severe pneumonia is present, a person may need to stay in the hospital. This is to monitor symptoms while getting the needed treatment.



Drink Fluids and Eat Healthy

Fluids help thin and loosen mucus, so your healthcare provider may advise you to increase your fluid intake. Drinking water is best. To help fight infection, you may also be advised to make healthier eating choices. This generally involves eating more lean proteins, whole grains, and fruits and vegetables. If you don't feel hungry, try to eat small meals or healthy snacks spread throughout the day, rather than fewer larger meals.

Get Plenty of Rest and Sleep

You may be more tired than usual for a while. This is normal. To help your body recover, be sure to get plenty of sleep at night. Also, take frequent breaks, and rest throughout the day. Be patient with yourself. As you get stronger, you may ease back into your usual activities.



Learning the Best Ways to Cough

Your healthcare provider may teach you ways to cough more effectively. This can help clear your lungs of excess mucus. One way to improve your cough is described here:

- Sit in a chair with both feet on the floor. Fold one arm across your abdomen
- Take a slow, deep breath in through your nose. Lean forward slightly.
- Cough 2 short, sharp coughs into a tissue. As you cough, gently push your arm against your abdomen. (You can also hold a pillow against your abdomen.)
- Relax for a moment, then take in another slow, deep breath and repeat



Methods to Loosen and Drain Excess Mucus from the Lungs

If you're having difficulty loosening the mucus in your lungs on your own, there are other methods that may be recommended.

These include:

- **Postural drainage** – lying with your chest lower than your abdomen to help drain the mucus so it's easier to cough up
- **Handheld positive expiratory pressure (PEP) device** – sends vibrations down into the lungs to help “shake up” and loosen the mucus making it easier to cough up



HOW LONG DOES PNEUMONIA LAST AND ARE THERE COMPLICATIONS?



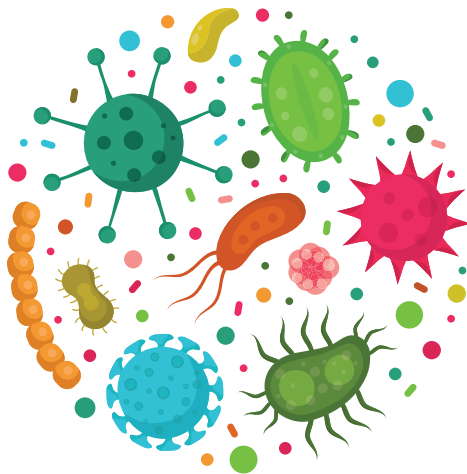
How Long?

Pneumonia can last a long or short time. It varies from person-to-person. The length depends on the type of organism involved, the general health of the person, and how promptly they get medical care. Some people need to be hospitalized, while others can continue their routine without being aware that they are infected.

Certain people have to limit their work or school schedule for a short time. Your healthcare provider can help you define limits on work or other activities. It is important to remember that infection (especially from viruses) may lead to a cough that lasts for 6-8 weeks after the infection clears. You may want to talk with your healthcare provider about how long your symptoms may last.

Complications

Complications from pneumonia may occur. Bacterial infections may follow viral pneumonia. This may require that antibiotics be added or altered to treat the new organism.



PNEUMONIA

Rarely, a lung abscess may result from pneumonia. If excess fluid builds up in the sac around that lungs (pleural effusion), it may need to be drained. Low blood sodium (hyponatremia) can also be a complication of bacterial pneumonia. Children are prone to this. In these cases, a person may need to be hospitalized for IV



(intravenous) fluids. A bloodstream infection, septic shock, and respiratory failure requiring admission to an intensive care unit (ICU) can occur in the most severe cases. Many complications from pneumonia can be prevented by **prompt** medical care.



HOW CAN I PREVENT PNEUMONIA?

Immunizations

Staying up-to-date on immunizations can help prevent pneumonia. These can help prevent infections that can cause pneumonia. The pneumonia vaccine and yearly flu vaccine are recommended, especially for anyone over 65 years of age, or anyone ages 2-64 with certain chronic health conditions, a weakened immune system, or anyone who smokes. Discuss the needs for these vaccinations with your healthcare provider.



Hand Washing

Most germs spread through touch. To prevent pneumonia from spreading to others, wash your hands often.

- Use warm water and plenty of soap. Work up a good lather. Clean your whole hands, under your nails, between your fingers, and up to your wrists. Wash for at least 20 seconds. Rinse completely. Then dry your hands with a clean cloth or paper towel.
- When not near a sink, clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Then wash your hands the first chance you get. In general, it's a good idea to always keep a small bottle of hand sanitizer with you.





Other Preventative Measures

- Don't smoke. Smokers have a much higher risk for pneumonia. Stay away from places where people are smoking.
- Avoid people who are sick with a cold or flu.
- Eat healthy foods and drink plenty of fluids
- Be active. Even light physical activity can help you be healthier.





YOUR TREATMENT AND RECOVERY



PNEUMONIA MANAGEMENT GUIDE

Green Zone: ALL CLEAR

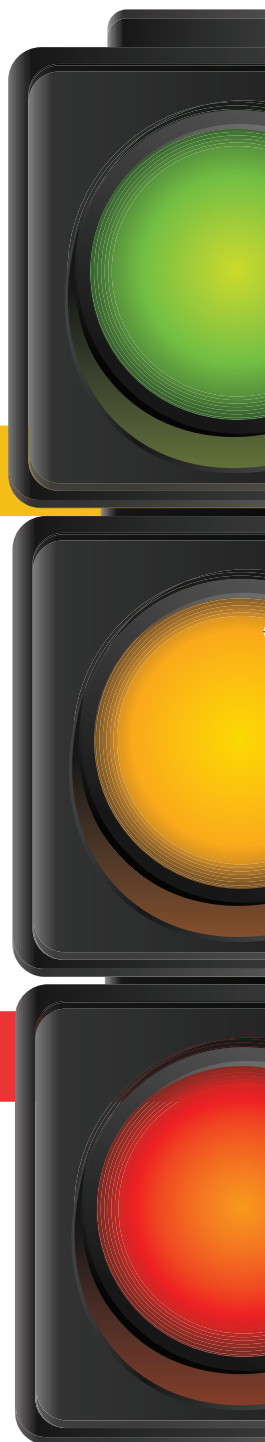
- Clear or white sputum
- Breathing without problems
- Able to think clearly
- Can do normal activities
- Symptoms are under control

Yellow Zone: CAUTION

- Sputum is yellow, green, bloody, or has an odor
- Fever greater than 101° (over 24 hours)
- Difficult, shallow, fast breathing with shortness of breath or wheezing, increased coughing
- Restless, confused or cranky
- Normal activities are difficult or cause tiring
- Loss of appetite
- Medication not helping or you have run out

Red Zone: MEDICAL ALERT

- Sudden crushing or squeezing chest pain
- Coughing large amounts of blood
- Skin color is pale or gray
- Fingernails or lips are blue
- Confusion or agitation



Actions

- Continue taking all medications and using mucous clearing device as ordered
- Keep all doctor appointments

Actions

- Call your doctor, nurse or home care nurse if one or more of these problems are present

Doctor Number:

Home Care Number:

Other Instructions:

Actions

CALL YOUR DOCTOR RIGHT AWAY

Doctor:

Number:

If you have not reached your doctor in _____ minutes, call 911



RIVERSIDE

CARDIAC REHABILITATION

500 N. Wall Street, Suite C401
Kankakee, IL 60901
(815) 935-3271
riversidehealthcare.org

751319 Revised 9/2020