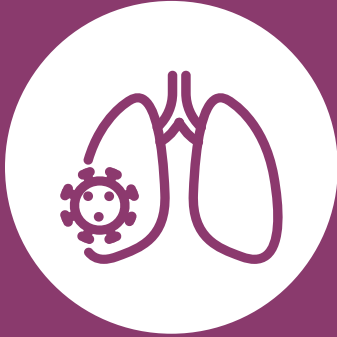


Fact Sheet



Division of Developmental Disabilities Health Care Services



Pneumonia

Safety Information Fact Sheet #10

Pneumonia is an infection caused by various bacteria and/or viruses growing in the lungs and causing swelling, irritation, and mucous production. Swelling and mucous in the lungs can make it very tiring and difficult to breathe. Pneumonia can be life threatening in the very young, elderly, and those with chronic health conditions.

Fact Sheet guidelines have been provided as general information, not as a substitution for medical treatment from a physician.

Some Facts about Pneumonia:

- Can be life-threatening to the very young, elderly, and those with lung problems like asthma.
- Causes extreme tiredness and confusion.
- May require hospitalization.
- Requires taking antibiotics as ordered—no missed or delayed doses.

Risk Factors (Causes):

The following increases chances of getting Pneumonia:

- Poor hygiene (no hand washing)
- Smoking or second-hand smoke
- Chronic conditions such as asthma, diabetes, emphysema, cerebral palsy, and others
- Lack of current flu and/or pneumonia vaccination
- Swallowing problems that cause food and liquids to seep into the lungs
- Contact with people who have flu or cold symptoms

What to Watch For:

Signs and symptoms of Pneumonia:

- **Common Symptoms:**
 - *Cough* with greenish, tan, yellow, or pink mucous
 - *Fever* (mild or high) with shaking & chills
 - *Shortness of breath* with daily activities
- **Other Symptoms:**
 - *Confusion & behaviors* in the elderly & individuals with disabilities
 - *Excess sweating* and/or clammy skin
 - *Headache*
 - *Fatigue* resulting in excessive sleeping/lethargy
 - *Loss of appetite*
 - *Unable* to drink enough fluids
 - *Chest pain* that is sharp or stabbing during deep breathing

What to Do/Prevention:

- **Hand washing** - Encourage frequent hand washing especially:
 - After blowing the nose, going to the bathroom, diapering, or performing personal care on self or others;
 - Before eating or preparing foods;
 - Before and after activity changes (when coming back from an outing).
- **Don't smoke** — Tobacco damages the lungs' ability to fight infection.
 - Limit second-hand smoke exposure.
 - Ensure smoking is only permitted in designated areas.
 - Encourage smoking cessation activities.
- **Vaccinations:**
 - Flu vaccine prevents pneumonia and other problems caused by the influenza virus.
 - Pneumococcal vaccine (Pneumovax, Prevnar) lowers the chances of getting pneumonia.

What to Do/Treatment:

- Start antibiotics right away (within 6 hours of diagnosis or prescription) and finish all doses even when feeling better.
- Follow and complete all instructions from the medical provider or in the discharge orders.
- Schedule a follow-up appointment with the Primary Care Provider (PCP) following care in the urgent care, emergency room, or after discharge.
- Consult with the PCP if there is no improvement or worsening symptoms after 72 hours (3 days) of antibiotic use.
- Obtain a chest x-ray 6 - 8 weeks after treatment to ensure there are no fluids in the lungs.
- Allow for extra rest and sleep to help with recovery; limit activities and outings.
- Limit social contacts for the first 3 - 4 days when pneumonia is the most contagious.

Pneumonia Hot Topics



Prevention:

- **Hand washing** - Encourage frequent hand washing especially:
 - After blowing your nose, going to the bathroom, diapering, or performing personal care on self or others, and before eating or preparing foods
 - Before and after activity changes (when coming back from an outing)
- **Don't smoke** - Tobacco damages the lungs' ability to fight infection
 - Limit second-hand smoke exposure
 - Ensure smoking is only permitted in designated areas
 - Encourage smoking-cessation activities
- **Vaccinations** - Help prevent some types of flu and/or pneumonia
 - *Flu vaccine* prevents pneumonia and other problems caused by the influenza virus
 - *Pneumococcal vaccine* (Pneumovax, Prevnar) lowers your chances of getting pneumonia.

Signs and Symptoms of Pneumonia:

- **Most common symptoms:**
 - **Cough:** May cough up greenish or yellow mucus or even bloody mucus.
 - **Fever:** Which may be mild or high; shaking chills.
 - **Shortness of Breath:** May only occur when you climb stairs.
- **Other symptoms:**
 - **Confusion & Behaviors:** Especially in older individuals and those with developmental disabilities
 - **Excess Sweating & Clammy Skin**
 - **Headache**
 - **Loss of Appetite, Low Energy & Fatigue**
 - **Sharp or Stabbing Chest Pain:** Gets worse when you breathe deeply or cough

Action Items:

- Institute hand washing reminders/monitoring
- Ensure all eligible individuals are current with flu & pneumonia vaccinations
- Call the doctor for an appointment when symptoms of pneumonia are noted
- Access Urgent Care and/or ER if after hours or symptoms are severe
- Start prescribed antibiotic within six (6) hours of diagnosis or prescription
- Make a follow-up appointment with the individual's regular doctor or PCP after Urgent Care/ER visit and/or a hospital admission/observation
- Notify regular doctor or PCP if there is no improvement or worsening of symptoms after 48-72 hours (2-3 days) of antibiotic use
- Make a follow-up appointment with the regular doctor or (PCP) to obtain chest x-ray 6-8 weeks after treatment even if the individual is doing well. Fluid may still be in the lungs.

Emergency:

Call 9-1-1 for any of the following conditions:

- Difficulty Breathing
- Loss of Consciousness or Changes in Level of Consciousness
- Severe Pain
- Start CPR immediately after calling 9-1-1 when the member is non-responsive and a heartbeat (pulse) cannot be detected.

Call 9-1-1 immediately if any of the following occur:

- Shortness of breath
- Loss of consciousness
- New confusion
- Bleeding
- Inability to move
- Excessive pain

The Pneumonia Fact Sheet is #10 in a series of Health Information Fact Sheets compiled by DDD Health Care Services.

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