

Pneumonia

What is pneumonia?

Pneumonia is an infection in the lung. Germs called bacteria or viruses can cause the infection. Fluid collects in the infected part of the lung. As the fluid collects, oxygen cannot go into that part of the lung making it hard to breathe. When your body gets less oxygen, you also have trouble moving around and doing your daily activities.

Pneumonia can occur at any age. It is a common and serious problem with older adults. It may take a long time to recover from pneumonia.

Pneumonia is more common during the cold and flu season but you can get it at any time of the year.

What are the signs of pneumonia?

Some people show some signs of pneumonia while other people have no signs of the infection. The common signs are:

- fever or lower temperature than normal
- chills
- chest pain or heaviness when breathing
- a dry cough or cough with sputum
- breathing very fast
- nausea, vomiting, diarrhea

Delirium is another sign of pneumonia. Delirium is a sudden or confused state of mind that comes and goes.

Who is at risk of getting pneumonia?

Many older people are at risk of getting pneumonia.

Some risk factors are:

- poor diet and dental hygiene
- smoking
- drinking too much alcohol

More risks factors are:

- long term health problems
- swallowing problems
- tube feeding
- poor immune status
- seizures

Some ways to stay healthy:

- Follow a healthy diet. Eat fruits and vegetables. Drink 6 to 8 glasses of water a day if you are allowed. If you have kidney or heart problems, check with your doctor and a dietitian about the amount you can drink.
- Follow an exercise plan and lose weight if you need to. Exercise helps your blood move around, your lungs expand and your muscles stay strong. Get the proper amount of rest too.
- Follow good mouth and dental care habits to avoid bacteria build up in the mouth.
- Stop smoking. If you need help contact the Smokers' Helpline at 1-877-513-5333. This is run by the Canadian Cancer Society and offers personal support, reading materials and much more.
- Avoid sudden extremes in temperature.
- Drink alcohol in moderation.



Contact your doctor:

- Talk to your doctor about getting an influenza vaccine or flu shot each year and pneumonia vaccine. These can decrease symptoms.