

UNDERSTANDING PNEUMONIA

WHAT IS PNEUMONIA?

Pneumonia is an infection that inflames the air sacs in one or both lungs, called alveoli. The alveoli may fill up with pus or fluid, making breathing difficult.

CAUSES

Fungi, bacteria, and viruses can cause pneumonia. The most common causes include:

- Flu viruses and rhinoviruses (cold viruses)
- Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)
- Bacteria, such as *Streptococcus pneumoniae* and *Mycoplasma pneumoniae*.

WHO IS AT RISK FOR PNEUMONIA?

You may be at risk for pneumonia if you:

- Are over the age of 65
- Have a weakened or compromised immune system
- Are currently or have recently been hospitalized
- Smoke cigarettes or drink excessive amounts of alcohol
- Have recently experienced a respiratory infection
- Have had a stroke or have difficulty swallowing
- Have been exposed to lung irritants, including chemicals, fumes and pollution
- Are living with chronic medical conditions, such as diabetes, heart failure, asthma, or cystic fibrosis

WAYS TO PREVENT PNEUMONIA

- The CDC recommends two vaccines to adults over the age of 65 to help prevent pneumococcal disease, Pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine and Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine. Do not take both vaccines at the same time
- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- Clean high-touch surfaces
- Limit contact with cigarette smoke or quit smoking
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue or your sleeve
- Promptly dispose of used tissues
- Carefully manage your health conditions
- Maintain a healthy lifestyle: get adequate rest, get sufficient exercise, and eat a healthy diet

TYPES

Pneumonia can be classified according to how and where it was acquired:

Ventilator - associated pneumonia

Hospital - acquired pneumonia

Community - acquired pneumonia

SYMPTOMS

Depending on the bacteria, virus or fungi causing the infection and the individual's overall health and age, symptoms of pneumonia can be mild to severe. It is important for adults over the age of 65 to see a doctor if they are experiencing signs of pneumonia.

- Chest pain
- Dehydration
- Cough
- Headaches
- Confusion
- Diarrhea
- Low body temperature
- Loss of appetite
- Fast breathing
- Shallow breathing
- Shortness of breath
- Chills or sweating

HOW TO TREAT PNEUMONIA

Pneumonia treatment involves curing the infection and preventing complications. Mild pneumonia can usually be treated at home, but more severe cases may require hospitalization.

- If prescribed antibiotics, be sure to finish taking the full course of the medication
- Pain relievers may help relieve pain and reduce fevers
- Drink lots of fluids to help bring up phlegm
- Get plenty of rest to regain your energy; do not exert too much strength in every day activities
- Speak with your doctor before taking cough medicines