

Pneumonia

Pneumonia is an inflammation of the lungs caused by an infection or by inhaling a chemical or liquid. Common causes are bacteria, viruses and fungi. Children under the age of 2 are at highest risk for pneumonia. Pneumonia is spread by infected people who carry the bacteria in their throat or by fluid droplets from their nose or mouth. Some people who carry the bacteria do not get sick. Pneumonia occurs most often during the cold months of the year when children spend most of their time indoors in close contact with other children and adults.

Signs and Symptoms

- Severe, shaking chills
- Cough
- Fast, difficult breathing
- Fever
- Chest pains
- Muscle aches
- Loss of appetite
- Tiredness
- Nausea or vomiting

Treatment of Pneumonia

If your child's doctor or healthcare provider believes a bacterial germ causes the pneumonia, the doctor will probably prescribe antibiotics. The symptoms of pneumonia should improve 12 to 36 hours after your child starts taking the medicine. However, treatment with antibiotics depends on the germ. Pneumonia caused by a virus cannot be treated with antibiotics.

Preventing Pneumonia

- All children 2 years old and younger should get the pneumococcal pneumonia vaccine. This prevents one type of pneumonia. Older children may also have other types of the vaccine.
- Teach children to cover their noses and mouths with facial tissue when sneezing or coughing and throw away tissues after use.
- Teach and practice good hand washing (Picture 1).
- Wash with soap and water any surfaces that are touched often such as toys, tables and doorknobs.
- Children older than 6 months should have a flu vaccine yearly if they do not have an egg allergy.



Picture 1 Teach your child good hand washing habits.

When to Call the Doctor

You should call your child's doctor if:

- Your child has trouble breathing or is breathing much faster than usual.
- Your child has a bluish or gray color to the fingernails or lips.
- Your child is older than 6 months and has a fever over 102°F, or younger than 6 months and has a temperature over 100.4°F.

When Your Child Should Stay Home from School or Childcare

Children should stay home from school or childcare if:

- They have a fever over 100 degrees with other signs of illness that make it hard for the child to take part in school or childcare activities.
- The child's care requires more time and attention than the care provider can give without affecting the care of other children in the group.