

What is pneumonia?

Pneumonia is infection of the lungs which is usually caused by bacteria, viruses or fungus. Infection of the lungs often occurs after an infection that starts in the nose and throat area spreads to the lungs. Pneumonia can be caused by viruses, bacteria, and fungi.

Who is at risk for pneumonia?

Children ages 6 to 23 months and people older than 65, those who have asthma and lung disease, and tobacco smokers are at highest risk for pneumonia. However, pneumonia can affect anyone.

What are the symptoms of pneumonia?

Symptoms may include cough, sputum (mucus) production while coughing, difficult breathing, fever, muscle aches, loss of appetite and lethargy.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Pneumonia can be caused by a variety of germs, so the appearance of symptoms will depend on the germ causing the pneumonia.

How is pneumonia spread?

This will depend on the type of germ causing the pneumonia, but usually pneumonia is not spread easily from person to person. Check with your health care provider for germ-specific information.

When and for how long is a person able to spread the disease?

The germ that is causing the pneumonia can spread if the person is still infectious at the time the pneumonia develops. Most of the germs that cause pneumonia are spread by direct or close contact with mouth and nose secretions and touching contaminated objects.

How is a person diagnosed?

This will depend on the germ that caused the pneumonia. If you have questions, consult a health-care professional.

What is the treatment?

Antibiotics will not work against viruses, so treatment of viral pneumonia may consist of bed rest, drinking more than the usual amount of liquids and taking pain relievers to help reduce discomfort, and antipyretics. If the pneumonia is caused by bacteria, however, your doctor may decide to treat you with an antibiotic.

Consult a health care professional for treatment recommendations.

Does past infection make a person immune?

Because many different germs can cause pneumonia, people are able to get pneumonia more than once.

Should children or others be excluded from child care, school, work or other activities if they have pneumonia?

No. Infants, toddlers and school-age children should not be excluded unless the staff determines the child is unwilling or unable to participate in activities. They also should be excluded if the staff determines that they cannot care for the child without compromising their ability to care for the health and safety of the other children in the group.

What can be done to prevent the spread of pneumonia disease?

The best way to prevent pneumonia is to be vaccinated. Vaccines that prevent certain types of pneumonia include:

- Pneumococcal
- *Haemophilus influenzae* Type B
- Pertussis (whooping cough)
- Varicella (chickenpox)
- Measles
- Influenza

Use good hand washing techniques. Cover nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing with a disposable facial tissue and immediately throw the tissue in the garbage. People in group settings should change or cover contaminated clothing and wash their hands right after using facial tissues or having contact with mucus to prevent the spread of disease by contaminated hands. Sanitize surfaces that are touched by hands frequently, such as toys, tables and doorknobs.

Additional Information:

Additional information is available at www.ndhealth.gov/disease or by calling the North Dakota Department of Health at 800.472.2180.

Resources:

American Academy of Pediatrics. In: Kimberlin DW, Brady MT, Jackson MA, Long SS, eds. *Red Book: 2015 Report of the Committee on Infectious Diseases*. 30th ed. Elk Grove Village, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics; 2015

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov/pneumonia/