

# Pneumonia

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## 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
- 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 risk factors are:**

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

**How is pneumonia treated?**

Antibiotic medication is used to treat pneumonia caused by bacteria. There are many types of antibiotics. Your health care provider will decide which antibiotic is best for you. If you are prescribed antibiotic medication, you will need to take **ALL** of the medication until it is done, even if you feel better. Do not stop taking this medication unless your health care provider tells you to stop.

**What are some ways to stay healthy?**

- 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.

**What resources are available to help me to stop smoking?**

- The Canadian Cancer Society offers personal support, reading materials and much more.
- If you need help contact the Smokers' Helpline 1-877-513-5333 or check online: [www.smokershelpline.ca](http://www.smokershelpline.ca)
- Public Health Tobacco Hotline: 905-540-5566, ext. 1 for counselling and free medication samples.

**When do I contact my health care provider?**

- Follow-up with your health care provider in 1 week.
- If you feel worse, call your health care provider or seek medical help.
- Talk with your health care provider about getting an influenza vaccine or flu shot each year and pneumonia vaccine. These can decrease symptoms.