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## What is pneumonia?

Pneumonia is a lung infection caused by viruses or bacteria (germs). It can be found either by a doctor listening to the chest or by an X-ray. Pneumonia is not easily passed from one person to another.

## What are the possible symptoms?

Your child may have 1 or more of these:

- Fever (temperature of 100.4°F or higher) and chills
- Chest or stomach (belly) pain
- Trouble or pain with breathing
- Fast breathing
- Does not feel hungry
- Vomiting (throwing up)
- Feels weak or tired
- Cough

## What is the treatment?

There are many types of antibiotic medicines that can treat pneumonia. Most children improve quickly over a few days, but the cough may last 1 week or longer. Some treatment guidelines to follow include:

- Give antibiotics as advised by your child's doctor. Note: antibiotics help pneumonia caused by bacteria but not pneumonia caused by a virus.
- Give any other medicines as advised by your child's doctor. This may include medicines to open the airways and to help your child breathe easier if needed.
- Give acetaminophen (Tylenol or less costly store brand) or ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil or less costly store brand) for fever or pain if advised by the doctor. Follow the directions on the box carefully, or ask your child's doctor how much medicine to give.

### **DO NOT:**

- Give your child more than 5 doses of acetaminophen (Tylenol) in a 24-hour period.
- Give acetaminophen (Tylenol) to babies younger than 3 months old without talking with your child's doctor.
- Give ibuprofen to babies younger than 6 months old without talking with your child's doctor.
- Give acetaminophen (Tylenol) and ibuprofen (Motrin or Advil) together.
- Coughing helps clear mucus from the chest and lungs. Most children will not spit out the mucus. Instead, they may swallow it. This is not a problem.
- Give cough and cold medicines only as advised by your child's doctor. This includes both prescription and over-the-counter medicines.

**In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.**

# Pneumonia, continued

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- For children younger than 6 years old – cough and cold medicines do not work well. They can also cause serious side effects.
- Do not give a child younger than 6 years old any medicine that is made for children older than 6 years old.
- Many brands of cough and cold medicines have the same kinds of ingredients. Using more than 1 brand or mixing brands can cause a serious overdose and harm your child.
- Do not use a combination cold medicine that contains acetaminophen or ibuprofen.
- Give plenty of clear fluids, such as flat, non-carbonated drinks and water. Do not force your child to eat food.
- Help your child get plenty of rest.
- Place a cool mist humidifier by your child's room or play area.
  - Change the water, and clean the humidifier each day.
  - Follow the cleaning instructions that came with the machine so it does not grow germs and mold.
  - Do not use a hot steam vaporizer. They are not safe and may burn your child.
- Avoid cigarette smoke and smells around your child.

## How can I help keep germs from spreading?

- Hand hygiene is the most important thing you can do to help prevent the spread of germs. You may use:
  - Soap and water to wash your hands well for at least 20 seconds. Rinse and dry them well.
  - An alcohol-based gel or foam if you do not see dirt or grime on your hands.
- Teach your child to cough or sneeze into their upper sleeve or elbow, not their hands. If they use a tissue, teach them to put it into the trash right away.

## Can pneumonia be prevented?

There are 3 vaccines that can help prevent certain types of pneumonia:

- PCV – this pneumonia vaccine is most often given to babies at 2 months, 4 months, 6 months and between 12 and 15 months of age.
- PPV – this vaccine is advised in addition to the PCV for high risk groups.
- Flu – a virus that causes influenza (the flu) can also cause pneumonia. Getting the flu vaccine each year can help prevent this type of pneumonia.

Talk with your child's doctor about whether or not the pneumonia or flu vaccine is right for your child.

## When can my child return to day care or school?

Keep your child home until they:

- Feel better.
- Have no fever without getting fever medicines for 24 hours.

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# Pneumonia, continued

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## When should I call the doctor?

Call the doctor if your child:

- Does not smile or want to play for at least a few minutes in 4 hours.
- Wheezes or breathes harder than they did when the doctor last saw them.
- Your baby cannot breathe and suck at the same time or chokes when they suck.
- Has a tight feeling in the chest.
- Cannot be calmed for at least a few minutes each hour using methods that most often work for your child, such as holding, rocking, pacifiers or soothing talk.
- Is not better or feels tired and weak after 3 days.
- Has a new fever since seeing the doctor.

Call the doctor if you see:

- Signs of dehydration:
  - No urine in 6 hours in a baby younger than 1 year old
  - No urine in more than 8 hours in a child older than 1 year old
  - No tears when crying
  - Sunken eyes
  - Dry lips and mouth
- Bloody saliva (spit), phlegm or mucus.

Also call the doctor if you have any questions or concerns about how your child looks or feels.

## When should I call 911?

Call 911 **right away** if your child:

- Is so tired and weak that they hardly respond to you.
- Is working **very** hard to breathe or finds it hard to take a breath.
- Grunts when they breathe.
- Has chest retractions (skin pulling in around the ribs and chest when breathing).
- Has a blue or dark purple color to the nails, lips or gums.
- Stops breathing for more than 10 seconds.
- Cannot talk while trying to breathe.
- Has any breathing problem that needs care **right away**.

**This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.**

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