

Pneumococcal Pneumonia

What is it?

Pneumonia is a lung disease that can be caused by a variety of viruses, bacteria, and sometimes fungi. Pneumococcal pneumonia is an infection in the lungs caused by bacteria called *Streptococcus pneumoniae*. *S. pneumoniae*, also called pneumococcus, can infect the upper respiratory tracts of adults and children and can spread to the blood, lungs, middle ear, or nervous system.

What are the symptoms?

Pneumococcal pneumonia may begin with sudden onset of severe chills, high fever, cough, shortness of breath, rapid breathing and chest pains. Other symptoms include: nausea, vomiting, headache, tiredness and muscle aches.

Who is at risk?

Pneumococcal pneumonia mainly causes illness in children younger than two years old and adults 65 years of age or older. Elderly people are at risk of becoming seriously ill and dying from this disease. People with certain medical conditions such as chronic heart, lung, or liver diseases or sickle cell anemia are also at increased risk of serious illness from pneumococcal infection. People with HIV infection, AIDS, or people who have had organ transplants and are taking medicines that lower their resistance to infection are also at high risk.

When do symptoms start?

It may take as little as one to three days after coming in contact with the infection for symptoms to appear, but this is not well determined.

When is it contagious?

It is presumed that the disease can be spread until the droplets from the nose and throat no longer contain infective pneumococci in high numbers.

How is it spread?

At any given time, up to 70 per cent of healthy people will have pneumococci bacteria in their nose and throat. Children generally harbour more of the bacteria than adults. Pneumococci are spread through contact with droplets from the nose and throat of infected people when they cough or sneeze, or from direct oral contact with an infected person. It can also be spread by contact with soiled surfaces or objects.

How is it treated?

Pneumococcal pneumonia can be treated with antibiotics, usually penicillin, but some strains are resistant to antibiotics. If the strain of bacteria causing the infection is not resistant, appropriate treatment with an antibiotic will leave the person not contagious within 24 to 48 hours.

How can the spread of Pneumococcal Pneumonia be reduced?

- Vaccination with pneumococcal vaccine is the best way to prevent pneumococcal pneumonia. Vaccines are available for children and adults.
- Good hand washing is very important.
- Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing. Put soiled tissues in the garbage right away.

What should I do if I get sick with Pneumococcal Pneumonia?

- Stay home and away from others until symptoms have gone.
- Get plenty of rest and drink lots of fluids. • Contact your health care provider for appropriate treatment.

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