

# WHAT IS PNEUMONIA?



## Could You Have Pneumonia?

Symptoms of pneumonia can be mild or serious. They may include:

- Chest pain when breathing or coughing
- Chills and/or fever
- Coughing with or without mucus
- Low blood oxygen levels
- Shortness of breath

Other symptoms may include a headache, muscle pain, extreme tiredness, nausea (feeling sick to your stomach), vomiting, and diarrhea. Older adults may experience weakness, confusion, or a lower-than-normal temperature instead of a fever. Sometimes babies may vomit, appear restless or have low energy, or show signs of breathing problems.

Pneumonia can be hard to diagnose because its symptoms are similar to a cold or flu. Symptoms can vary from mild to severe depending on the type of germ causing the infection, your age, and overall health. To diagnose pneumonia, your doctor will review your medical history and do a physical exam. They may also do a chest X-ray, blood test, or measure the oxygen in the blood.

Learn the facts about pneumonia, its signs and symptoms, and ways to manage it after a diagnosis.



## Basic Facts About Pneumonia



Pneumonia is an infection that causes the air sacs (called alveoli) in one or both lungs to fill up with fluid or pus.



Germs such as bacteria, viruses, or fungi can cause pneumonia. Influenza (flu) is an example of a virus that can cause pneumonia.



Pneumonia can be mild or severe. A person's health and age, and the type of germ causing the infection, all contribute to how serious it is.



Staying up to date on pneumococcus and flu vaccines can help prevent some types of pneumonia. Vaccines can also help decrease the severity for those who do get pneumonia.



**Pneumonia can affect** people of any age. However, children 2 years old or younger, and adults age 65 or older, are more likely to have serious pneumonia.



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### Managing Pneumonia

Treatment for pneumonia depends on the germ causing the infection, and how serious it is. Bacterial pneumonia is usually treated with antibiotics. But if you have viral pneumonia, antibiotics won't help. In mild cases, your doctor may prescribe medicine or suggest over-the-counter medicine to treat it at home.

For more serious cases, hospital treatment may be needed. At the hospital, people with pneumonia will receive medicine and fluids through an intravenous (IV) line. Sometimes oxygen therapy is used to pump oxygen into the blood. In very serious cases, a ventilator may be used to help with breathing. Damaged sections of the lung may also need to be removed to help prevent pneumonia from happening again.

Recovery can take weeks or even months. Your doctor may suggest lifestyle changes, such as eating healthy or getting enough sleep, to help with recovery. Talk to your healthcare provider about your treatment plan. This can help you avoid complications and start feeling better.

### How Pneumonia Affects Breathing

Sometimes germs like bacteria, viruses, or fungi can get into your airways through mucus. The airways are lined with hair-like cilia, which help to push the mucus and germs out of your airways, usually by coughing.

Sometimes germs make it into air sacs, or alveoli, in the lungs. The body's immune system usually attacks the germs. If the immune system is weakened, germs that cause pneumonia can multiply. As the body tries to fight off the germs, it can cause swelling, or inflammation. Inflammation can make air sacs in the lungs fill with fluid and pus. This makes it hard for the body to get enough oxygen and breathe easily.

