

Let's Talk About...

Pneumonia

Pneumonia (new-MOAN-ya) is a lung infection. Most of the time, a virus causes the pneumonia. Bacteria can also cause pneumonia. Rarely, other germs or some chemicals (toxins) cause pneumonia. When a baby or child gets pneumonia from bacteria, it often happens after a normal cold. The cold may lessen some of the body's natural defenses and let bacteria get in the lungs. Children, especially babies, can also get pneumonia by breathing in their food or vomit.

What does pneumonia look like?

Children with pneumonia may have some of these problems:

- Fast breathing
- Coughing
- Coughing up mucus
- Vomiting
- Belly pain
- Does not want to eat or eats poorly
- A bluish or gray color in the fingernails, lips, or tongue. (This is because there is not enough oxygen in the blood.)
- Fever
- Chills, sweating
- Body aches
- Trouble breathing
- Chest pain
- Less active or restless. (Younger children may be fussy.)
- Unusually fast breathing that makes a grunting, wheezing, or crackling sound

How do you prevent pneumonia?

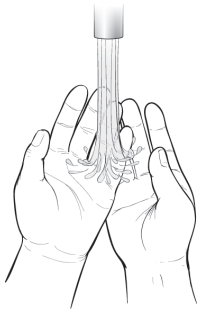
It is always a good idea to wash your hands and your child's hands well. If possible, keep your child away from sick people, especially those with a cough or the flu. Teach children to use their own utensils to drink and eat. Show her how to wash her hands correctly. Tell her to wash often (see illustrations below on the next page.) Mostly, though, children get pneumonia from germs they have in their mouth, nose, and throat. Everybody has these germs, but most of the time they do not make us sick. These germs cause pneumonia when the body's natural defense (immune system) is weak. One way to prevent serious illness from whooping cough, chickenpox, meningitis, measles, and other illnesses is to have your child receive vaccines. It is important for children over the age of six months to get a flu shot every year. Children who get their vaccinations are less likely to get pneumonia.

Children with weak immune systems, like children receiving radiation or chemotherapy, can get pneumonia more easily. These children should be especially careful around sick people. They may receive special medicine if they get pneumonia.

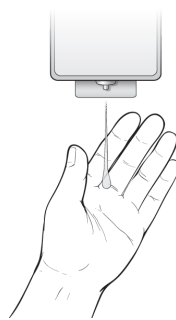
How do you know if it is pneumonia?

Pneumonia can seem a lot like the cold or the flu. It begins with a fever. Watch for a cough that won't go away or for breathing problems in children. For babies, you might see flaring (widening) of the nostrils or sucking in-between or under the ribs. You may hear your baby grunt, wheeze, or have crackling breaths. If you think your child might have pneumonia or if he simply looks quite sick, go to your doctor.

Hand washing with soap and water



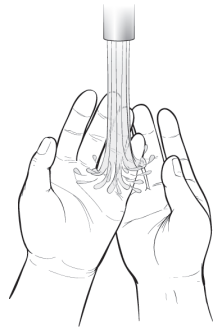
1. Wet hands with warm, running water.



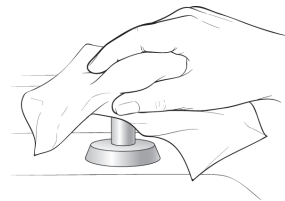
2. Apply liquid soap or use a clean bar of soap. Lather well.



3. Rub your hands together vigorously for at least 15 to 20 seconds. Be sure to scrub all surfaces of your hands and fingers.

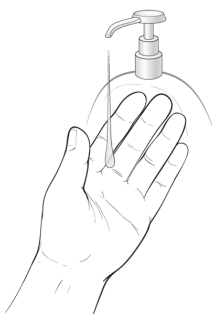


4. Rinse well. Dry your hands with a clean or disposable towel.



5. Use a towel to turn off the faucet.

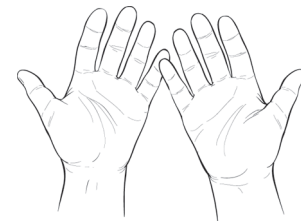
Hand washing with a hand-rub product



1. Use a product that contains at least 60% alcohol. Apply product to the palm of your hand. Read the product label to see how much to apply.



2. Be sure to cover all surfaces of your hands and fingers.



3. Rub your hands together until they are dry.

Doctors may be able to tell if it is pneumonia after an exam, but they might need to take chest x-rays or do blood tests.

How does the doctor treat pneumonia?

Pneumonia caused by bacteria can be treated with antibiotics. If the pneumonia is caused by a virus, antibiotics do not help.

Sometimes, after a virus, the child can get pneumonia caused by bacteria. If this happens, the bacteria can be treated with antibiotics.

Children and babies may have to stay in the hospital if there are complications, if they have whooping cough, or if their oxygen levels are low. Children may have to stay in the hospital if they are not able to take medicine by mouth, have a long-lasting (chronic) illness that affects the immune system, or if they are having trouble breathing. Sometimes children need antibiotics for a longer time to make sure their infection is gone.

If the doctor prescribes antibiotics for your child, be sure to give all of the medicine on schedule. Even if your child looks and feels better after a few days, the bacteria can come back if she does not receive all of the antibiotics prescription.

How can I help my child?

- Help your child drink plenty of fluids, especially if she has a fever.
- Ask your doctor before using any cough syrups or cough drops. They may not be helpful because your child needs to cough up the mucus in her chest.
- Take your child's temperature at least once in the morning and once in the evening.
- Keep your child away from smoke, secondhand smoke, and bad air.

Call your doctor if...

- Your child shows any of the signs or symptoms of pneumonia.
- Your child is having trouble breathing or is breathing very fast.
- Your child has bluish or gray lips or fingernails.
- Your child still has a fever or looks very ill after taking the antibiotic for 24 to 48 hours.
- Your child has red, swollen joints, bone pain, vomits, has a stiff neck or complains of chest pain.
- Your child is not drinking fluids well or is not able to take her antibiotics.