

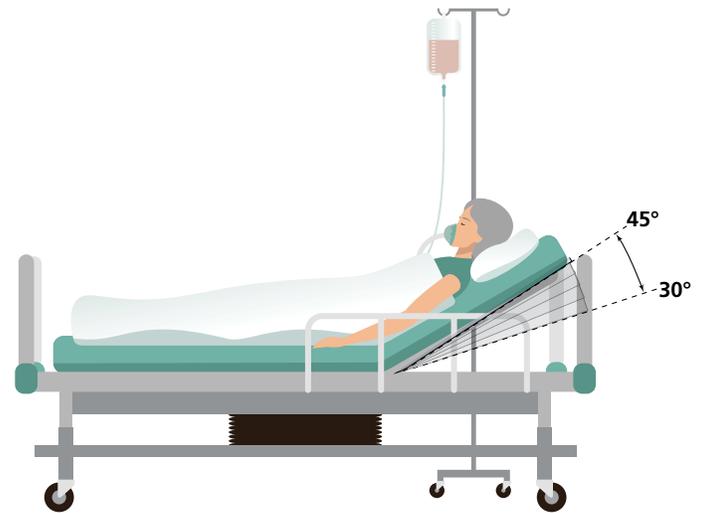
# Ventilator-Associated Pneumonia (VAP)

## What is ventilator-associated pneumonia?

Pneumonia is an infection of the lungs. A ventilator is a machine that helps you breathe by giving oxygen through a tube. The tube can be placed in your mouth, nose, or through a hole in the front of the neck. The tube is connected to a ventilator. Ventilator-associated pneumonia (or VAP) is a lung infection of pneumonia that starts when you are on a ventilator.

## Why do I need a ventilator?

You may need a ventilator when you are very ill, or during or after surgery. Ventilators can save lives, but they can also increase the chance of getting pneumonia by making it easier for germs to get into the lungs.



Your healthcare provider will raise the head of your bed between 30 and 45 degrees.

## Preventing Ventilator-associated Pneumonia

### YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS will do these things:

- Clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub before and after touching you or the ventilator (see page 2)
- Keep the head of your bed raised between 30 and 45 degrees, unless other medical conditions do not allow it.
- Check your ability to breathe on your own every day so that you can be taken off the ventilator as soon as possible.
- Clean the inside of your mouth on a regular basis.
- Clean or replace equipment between use on different patients.

### YOU and your family members can do these things:

- **Make sure that all healthcare providers caring for you** clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub (see page 2).
- **Keep your own hands clean.**
- **Ask about raising the head of your bed.**
- **Ask when you will be allowed to try breathing on your own.**
- **Have your family members ask how often your mouth has been cleaned.**
- **If you smoke, quit.** Patients who smoke get more infections. If you are going to have surgery and will need to be on a ventilator, talk to your doctor before your surgery about how you can quit smoking.

Your healthcare providers will do everything they can to prevent ventilator-associated pneumonia. You and your family members will work with them.

# Can ventilator-associated pneumonia be treated?

Ventilator-associated pneumonia is a very serious infection. Most of the time it can be treated with antibiotics. The choice of antibiotics depends on which specific germs are causing the infection. Your healthcare provider will decide which antibiotic is best.

The information in this fact sheet is cosponsored by:

- Society of Healthcare Epidemiology of America (SHEA)
- Infectious Disease Society of America (IDSA)
- American Hospital Association
- Association for Practitioners in Infection Control (APIC)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- The Joint Commission

## Questions for my doctor

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### Hand washing with soap and water



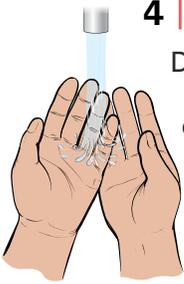
**1** | Wet hands with warm, running water.



**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 sanitizer



**1** | Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Apply it to the palm of your hand. Read the label to see how much to apply.



**2** | Be sure to cover all surfaces of your hands and fingers. Rub your hands together until they are dry.

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