



# Pneumonia

## Patient and Family Education

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**This teaching sheet contains general information only. Your child's doctor or a member of your child's health care team will talk with you about specific care for your child.**

### 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 one or more of these:

- Fever and chills
- Chest or stomach pain
- Trouble or pain with breathing
- Fast breathing
- Not feeling hungry
- Vomiting
- Weakness or tired feeling
- Cough

### What is the treatment?

Today there are many types of antibiotics available to treat pneumonia. Most children improve quickly over a few days. However, the cough may last for a week or longer. Your child's doctor will talk with you about specific care for your child. Some general guidelines to follow include:

- Give antibiotics as ordered by your child's doctor. **NOTE:** antibiotics help pneumonia caused by bacteria but not pneumonia caused by a virus.
- Acetaminophen (Tylenol or less costly store brand) or ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil or less costly store brand) may be given for fever or pain. Follow the directions on the box carefully or ask your doctor how much medicine to give.
  - **DO NOT** give your child more than 5 doses of acetaminophen in a 24-hour period.
  - **DO NOT** give acetaminophen to babies younger than 3 months of age without a doctor's advice.
  - **DO NOT** give ibuprofen to babies younger than 6 months of age without a doctor's advice.
  - **DO NOT** use acetaminophen and ibuprofen together. **DO NOT** alternate.
- Coughing helps clear mucus from the chest and lungs.
  - Most children will not spit out the mucus but will swallow it into their stomachs. 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.
  - For children younger than 6 years of age – cough and cold medicines do not work in this age group. They also can cause serious side effects.
  - Do not give a child younger than 6 years old any medicine that is made for children over the age of 6.
  - Many brands of cough and cold medicines have the same kinds or have unnecessary ingredients. Using more than 1 brand or mixing brands can cause a serious overdose and harm in your child.

**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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- Do not use a combination cold medicine that contains acetaminophen or ibuprofen.
- Give plenty of clear fluids such as Gatorade, flat, non-carbonated drinks and water. Do not force your child to eat solid foods.
- Help your child get plenty of rest.
- Place a cool mist humidifier by your child's room or play area.
  - Hot steam vaporizers are not safe. They may burn your child.
  - Change the water and clean the humidifier each day.
  - Follow the cleaning instructions that came with the machine, so it doesn't grow germs and mold.
- Avoid cigarette smoke and odor around your child.

### Can pneumonia be prevented?

There are 3 vaccines to help prevent certain types of pneumonia:

- The pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV7) is for babies and children younger than 2 years of age. It is one of the shots babies get during their regular checkups.
- The pneumococcal vaccine (PPV) is for anyone older than 2 years of age. This vaccine may be given to certain high-risk children.
- A virus that causes influenza (the flu) can also cause pneumonia. The flu vaccine can help prevent this type of pneumonia.
- Talk with your child's doctor about whether or not the flu or pneumonia vaccine is right for your child.

### When should I call the doctor?

**Call 911 or your local ambulance service right away if your child:**

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

### Call your child's doctor if your child:

- Does not smile or show interest in play for at least a few minutes during a four-hour period
- Wheezes or breathes harder than he did when he was seen by the doctor.
- Your baby is unable to breathe and suck at the same time or chokes when he sucks
- Has a tight feeling in the chest
- Cannot be calmed for at least a few minutes each hour using methods that usually work for your child, such as holding, rocking, pacifiers or soothing talk
- Is not better or has a feeling of tiredness and weakness after three days
- Has a new fever since being seen by the doctor (temperature over 100.3°F)

Call the doctor if you see:

- Signs of dehydration (drying out):
  - No urine in six to eight hours in an infant younger than 1 year old
  - No urine in more than eight hours in a child older than 1 year old

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## Pneumonia, continued

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- No tears when crying
- Sunken eyes
- Dry lips and mouth
- Bloody saliva, phlegm or mucus

Also call the doctor if:

- You have any questions or concerns about how your child looks or feels.

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