

Dear Parent:

Pneumonia is an infection that settles in the lungs. It can be caused by either bacteria or viruses. Symptoms vary from patient to patient. The most common symptoms of pneumonia are: fever, chest pain, shaking/chills, rapid breathing, cough with or without sputum (phlegm).

With antibiotics, bacterial pneumonia improves within 24 - 48 hours. However, viral pneumonia can persist for several weeks and recovery is more gradual. Recurrence of pneumonia is rare.

Tests and Monitoring

Your child's doctor will order a medical examination which **may** include some or all of the following:

- 1) chest x-ray to identify the location and severity of the illness
- 2) sputum specimen to identify the "bug" causing the infection (your child may be asked to cough deeply to produce this sample)
- 3) nose or throat culture to rule out a viral infection
- 3) blood tests; and
- 4) vital signs—temperature, pulse, respirations and blood pressure will be monitored frequently to check your child's progress.

Treatment

Activity — Have your child rest or play quietly until the fever is gone. Encourage an increase in activity as soon as your child's condition allows. You need to encourage adequate rest to promote full recovery and prevent a relapse. If your child tires easily, alternate activities with rest to conserve your child's energy.

Diet — Your child's diet will be ordered by the doctor. Encourage lots of fluids daily to help clear your child's lungs. Warm liquids, such as warm lemonade, warm apple juice, etc., relax the airway, loosen secretions and will help with coughing spasms.

Medication — If a bacterial infection is suspected, an intravenous (IV) antibiotic is usually started to combat the infection. The antibiotic will be given by mouth after several days as your child's condition improves. Additional medications for fever, pain or other conditions will be given as ordered by your child's doctor. The doctor may order treatments performed by Respiratory Therapy personnel to help clear your child's lungs and decrease shortness of breath. Oxygen may be given as needed to also ease the symptoms. A nurse or pharmacist can provide information concerning your child's medication, what it is supposed to do, side effects, and how and when to take it.

After dismissal

There are several things you can do to help your child feel better:

- Don't let anyone smoke around your child. Tobacco smoke aggravates lung problems and

- prolongs recovery.
- Give your child all the medication the doctor has ordered.
 - Give acetaminophen (Tylenol) for fever. Do NOT give Aspirin.
 - Continue to encourage adequate fluid intake.
 - Encourage your child to get plenty of rest.
 - Use a humidifier in your child's room; dry air tends to make coughs worse.
 - Ask your doctor before using cough suppressant medications. The infectious secretions need to be coughed up.
 - Follow the doctor's instructions and keep your child's doctor's appointments.

Contact your doctor or return to the emergency room immediately if:

- Your child has increased trouble breathing – the breathing becomes more labored, a grunting sound occurs with breathing, or there are retractions (sinking of the skin between the ribs)
- Your child's lips turn blue
- Your child is unable to eat or drink
- You have other concerns or questions or if you feel your child is getting worse