

Dear Patient:

Pneumonia is an infection that settles in the lungs. Symptoms vary from patient to patient. The most common symptoms of pneumonia are: fever, chest pain, shaking/chills, tiredness, shortness of breath, rapid breathing, cough with or without sputum (phlegm).

Those who are most susceptible to pneumonia are under the age of one or over the age of 65. These individuals have less resistance to disease. Other risk factors are: chronic disease (diabetes, heart disease, lung disease), smoking, and those who drink excessive amounts of alcohol.

Tests and Monitoring

Your 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 (you may be asked to cough deeply to produce this sample)
- 3) blood tests; and
- 4) vital signs—temperature, pulse, respirations and blood pressure will be monitored frequently to check your progress.

Treatment

Activity — If you are confined to bed or on limited activity you will be asked to turn, cough and take deep breaths every few hours. We will encourage an increase in your activity as soon as your condition allows. You need to obtain adequate rest to promote full recovery and prevent a relapse. If you tire easily, alternate activities with rest to conserve your energy.

Diet — Your specific diet will be ordered by your doctor. Drink at least 10-12 glasses of fluid daily, water or juice is best, unless your doctor specifies differently. This will help to clear your lungs.

Medication — An intravenous (IV) antibiotic is usually started to combat the infection. Your antibiotic will be given by mouth after several days as your condition improves. Additional medications for fever, cough, pain or other conditions will be given as ordered by your doctor. Your doctor may order treatments or medications administered by Respiratory Therapy personnel to help clear your 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 medication’s name, what it is supposed to do, side effects, and how and when to take it.

Consults — Your individual needs will determine the consultations your doctor orders.
Respiratory Services—May be ordered for oxygen, breathing treatments and planning for your home care.
Social Services—A Social Worker may visit with you to help you plan ahead for your dismissal from the hospital.

General Information

There are several things you can do to feel better:

- If you smoke, talk to your physician, pharmacist, or nurse about medications to help you quit.
- You must take all the medication the doctor has ordered for you as he/she has instructed.
- Get plenty of rest, and take naps as needed.
- Coughing and breathing exercises will help get your lungs to expand to their fullest, and will bring up the sputum that is causing some of the problems. Continue adequate fluid intake and avoid cough syrup unless the cough is interfering with your sleep at night.
- There are individuals who are susceptible to recurring infections. However, you can take the following precautions:
 - Avoid irritants (smoking, dust, alcohol)
 - Obtain yearly flu immunizations
 - If you have not had a pneumonia vaccination, please ask your doctor. If you are over 65 when you get your vaccine, you will not need another one. If you are less than 65, you will need a booster vaccine in 5 years.
 - Avoid large crowds during the cold and flu seasons.

Recovery from pneumonia may take several weeks. Follow your doctor's instructions, keep your doctor's appointments, and think positively about your recovery.

Goals For Your Recovery

- To relieve your shortness of breath
- To decrease your fever
- To assure that your blood pressure, heart rate and respiratory rate are stable
- To educate you about your illness and treatment and help you prevent a relapse