

Pneumonia FACTSHEET

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What is Pneumonia?

Pneumococcal Pneumonia is an acute infection of the lower respiratory tract. It is the most common type of community-acquired pneumonia.

Who gets Pneumonia?

Pneumococcal pneumonia mainly causes illness in children younger than 2 years old and adults 65 years of age or older. The elderly are especially at risk of getting seriously ill and possibly dying from this disease. In addition, people with certain medical conditions such as chronic heart, lung, or liver diseases or sickle cell anemia are also at increased risk for getting pneumococcal pneumonia. Other people with weakened immune systems are also at higher risk of contracting this infection.

What are the symptoms of Pneumonia?

Pneumococcal pneumonia may begin suddenly. You may first have a severe shaking chill which is usually followed by:

- High fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Rapid breathing
- Chest pains

Other less common symptoms are nausea, vomiting, and body aches.

How is Pneumonia spread?

Pneumonia is spread from one person to another. This happens when you come into contact with an infected person's oral and nasal secretions, such as through a sneeze or cough. If you touch your mouth, nose or eyes after touching something that has these fluids on them, you may become ill. Also, if you drink from the same glass or eat from the same plate as the sick person, you also could become ill.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms usually appear 1-3 days after infection.

Is a person with Pneumonia contagious?

The period of time a person with Pneumonia is contagious is unknown. It can be as long as the organism appears in respiratory secretions. Preventive measures such as proper hand washing and covering coughs and sneezes can help prevent the spread of this infection to others.

How is Pneumonia treated?

Pneumonia can be treated with a variety of antibiotics. It is extremely important that the antibiotic is taken exactly as directed and that all of the antibiotic is finished. The symptoms of pneumococcal pneumonia usually go away within 12 to 36 hours after you start taking medicine. The medicine should never be shared with other family members or friends.

Should a person with Pneumonia be excluded from work or school?

Keeping children with respiratory symptoms out of school or day care may not decrease the spread of infection and therefore, children with colds or pneumonia usually can go back to school or day care as soon as they have no fever for 24 hours and feel well enough to be there. However, proper hand washing should continue to be strictly monitored.

Want more information?

Information about Pneumonia and other related health topics can be found at the website www.cdc.gov. The DC Department of Health promotes the health and safety of the District residents. For additional information, please call (202) 442-9371.

