

HEALTHY LIFESTYLE CHANGES TO PREVENT RE-INFECTION

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Having had pneumonia puts you at high risk for getting it again. But by making just a few healthy lifestyle changes in your daily routine, you can help your body become healthier, stronger, and can help prevent re-infection.

You can help prevent the spread of infections by getting into the habit of washing your hands frequently with soap and water, or using hand sanitizing gel if soap and water are not available. Before meals, after using the restroom, and before preparing food are all good times to wash your hands. This will help kill other peoples' germs that get on your hands after touching objects like keyboards, door knobs, and handrails.

It also helps to prevent the spread of your own germs, through coughing or sneezing, and after handling soiled tissues. And use disposable tissues rather than carrying a handkerchief.

If you are a smoker, the most important lifestyle change you can make is to quit. Smoking puts you at greater risk for frequent and more severe colds and illnesses. There are many ways and lots of help for you to quit and stay quit. Talk to your healthcare provider about smoking cessation.

Also avoid secondhand smoke; it's damaging to your lungs.

Making healthier food choices can help boost your immune system, and help you both physically and mentally. One of the best changes you can make is to add more whole grains, fruits and vegetables to your diet. This change can be achieved simply by adding a banana to your cereal, having a salad with dinner, or eating whole grain pasta. Making a few changes at a time can help you get started toward better nutrition.

If you are not regaining your strength, you may need to see a nutritionist for further help. Your healthcare provider should be able to refer you to one.

Another healthy change is to increase the amount of your physical activity. Exercise will help your body stay strong, including your immune system. It also helps relieve stress, which is good because too much stress can weaken the body's defenses against colds and flu.

Start slowly as you add more exercise to your daily routine. Your goal is to reach the activity level you had prior to your infection.

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Aerobic activity is best. But don't do too much at one time; take small steps such as taking a 10 minute walk, working in the yard for 15 minutes, or parking further away from the store.

Your healthcare provider might also recommend you take supplements like zinc, vitamin C, and Echinacea when you start to feel a cold coming on. These may help strengthen your body's defenses and shorten the amount of time you have the cold. These supplements are not for everyone, so be sure to talk with your healthcare provider before taking any.

Other things that can help the body's defenses are flu and pneumonia vaccines. These can help reduce the chance that you will get sick, and are usually recommended for people who have had pneumonia. Ask your healthcare provider when you should have these vaccinations.

You won't be able to make all of these healthy changes at once – don't expect to. Choose one goal to work toward at a time.

Making healthy lifestyle changes is great for your overall health. They can help you recover, and also help prevent you from contracting pneumonia in the future.

If you need more information, talk to your healthcare team.