

# **Your Care at Home: Pneumonia**

## **Narrator**

Pneumonia is no fun, especially if it was so bad it landed you in the hospital. But there are some things you can do to feel better. In the next few minutes, my friend and I will share some tips to get you back on your feet as soon as possible. Pneumonia is an infection in your lungs that can make it hard to breathe.

As you go home, you will likely still have some symptoms:

- A cough,
- Low energy level,
- Difficulty sleeping or
- Lack of appetite.

Be patient, all of these will slowly improve over the next week or two. If you're working, you'll need to take some time off, to give yourself time to recover. Breathing warm, moist air helps loosen the sticky mucus that may make you feel like you are choking. Fill a humidifier with warm water and breathe in the mist, or take a few moments and place a warm, wet washcloth loosely over your nose and mouth. Coughing also helps clear your airways. Take a few deep breaths 2 or 3 times every hour to help open up your lungs.

Here are a few more tips to loosen mucus in your lungs:

- Tap your chest gently a few times a day.
- Or lie down for a minute or so with your head lower than your chest.
- If you smoke, STOP, and don't allow anyone else to smoke in your home.
- If you have not been told to limit your fluids, drink plenty, at least 6-8 glasses a day. Water, tea, coffee, or sugar-free drinks are all good.
- Do NOT drink alcohol.
- And make sure you get lots of rest when you go home. If you have trouble sleeping at night, take naps during the day.

Your doctor may put you on antibiotics to treat your pneumonia. Take the medicine until it's gone even if you start to feel better. You don't want to risk a setback. If for some reason you can't take your medicine, talk to your doctor or nurse. Don't just stop taking it. And while you're at it, ask if it's okay to use over-the-counter medicines, like acetaminophen or ibuprofen, for fever or pain. Do NOT take cough medicine unless your doctor says it is okay. Coughing actually is a good thing. It helps your body get rid of mucus in your lungs.

No one knows better than you that pneumonia is no fun. So preventing it from coming back is really important. Make sure you get a flu shot every year, and ask your doctor or nurse if you need a pneumonia vaccine. Wash your hands often and stay away from crowds. Ask visitors who have a cold to wear a mask around you, and keep yourself as healthy as possible by eating well, staying active, and getting 7-9 hours of sleep every night.

If your doctor is sending you home with oxygen, there are a few things to keep in mind. Never change how much oxygen is flowing without asking your doctor. And, always have a back-up supply of oxygen handy. Your oxygen supplier can help with tips for using oxygen safely. That includes never letting anyone smoke near your tank.

Know when to call your healthcare team:

- If your breathing is getting harder or faster, or if it's shallow and you feel like you just can't catch a deep breath.
- If you need to lean forward to breathe more easily, or
- If you're using muscles around your ribs more to help you breathe or you feel chest pain on deep breaths.

Also call your doctor or nurse if:

- You're having a lot of headaches
- You feel sleepy, confused or feverish
- You're coughing up dark mucus or blood, or
- Your fingertips turn blue

Bottom line, if you start to feel worse, not better, don't ignore it. By following these healthy tips, you should be back to feeling like yourself again soon.

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