

# Pneumonia Care at Home

Pneumonia is a potentially serious condition, especially in older people and those with chronic illnesses or a weakened immune system. It occurs when a virus, bacteria or other infection causes air sacs in the lungs, known as Alveoli, to become inflamed and fill up with fluid or pus. This may result in symptoms including a cough that brings up mucus, fever, chills, a fast heart rate, shortness of breath, and chest pain when you breathe or cough.

*“The symptoms of pneumonia can vary. They can be mild to severe depending on such factors such as person’s age, the type of infection and the person’s overall health.”*

Getting a Pneumonia vaccine is the best way to prevent pneumonia and the serious complications it can cause. But if you do get pneumonia, it may be treatable at home, with measures including rest and plenty of fluids. In addition, you’ll be prescribed antibiotics if your pneumonia is caused by bacteria. Take them as directed and finish the entire prescription, even if you feel better.

Over-the-counter pain relievers like Acetaminophen or Ibuprofen can reduce achiness and fever. Coughing is good, because it helps loosen up mucus and remove it from your lungs. Over-the-counter cough medicines may have limited effectiveness so talk to your health care provider about whether to take them. Also, don’t smoke and stay away from other people’s smoke.

*“Generally, your symptoms of pneumonia should resolve within one to two weeks. If your symptoms do not improve or they get worse in that timeframe, then you should see your provider to be reevaluated.”*

Get medical attention right away if you have increased shortness of breath, chest pain, a fever of 102 degrees or higher, or you’re coughing up blood in your mucus. Avoid spreading your germs by washing your hands frequently with soap and water. Cover your nose and mouth when you cough – ideally into a tissue or the crook of your elbow rather than your hands.

*“You’re most contagious in the first two to three days after the start of your symptoms. Stay home until you feel better to avoid infecting others and to make sure that you fully recover.”*