



Preventing Postoperative Pneumonia



Overview

If you're having surgery, you need to know about a possible complication called "postoperative pneumonia." It's a lung infection some patients get at the hospital, or at home while recovering. It can be deadly.

Causes

Pneumonia is caused by exposure to a virus, bacteria or fungus. It can be especially hard for your body to fight these germs after surgery. Your risk goes up when you don't move around enough and don't take deep enough breaths, which can happen if you are lying down all day. It's important to follow your doctor's instructions to avoid an infection.

Deep breathing

You may be asked to use a device called an "incentive spirometer." You breathe through it, and it measures the volume of your breaths. It helps make sure you are taking deep breaths. You may also be asked to do coughing exercises. Coughing helps clear your lungs.

Get up and move

Getting up and moving around is good for your lungs. It helps loosen lung secretions. So get up and walk whenever you are told to. You'll feel better, and you may recover more quickly.

Proper positioning

When you are resting, it's important to be in the proper position. You may be asked to rest at a certain angle with your head elevated. That's to help you breathe more deeply, and to help you cough.

Pain management

And finally, if you've had surgery on your chest or abdomen, it's important to take your pain medications to control your soreness. This will help you take deep breaths and cough more comfortably.

Conclusion

Following all of your doctor's instructions can lower your risk for pneumonia and help you have a successful recovery.