

Pneumonia, Pediatric

Pneumonia is an infection of the lung. There are many different types of pneumonia. The type depends on:

- What parts of the lungs are infected.
- What germs are causing the infection.
- The setting (hospital or community).

CAUSES

Pneumonia can be caused by many types of germs. Viruses and bacteria are the most common types. Pneumonia can follow a cold or flu. This is because having a cold or flu can weaken how well the body can fight infection. Germs can then travel to the lungs when your body is sick. A person cannot get pneumonia from not wearing a hat or coat or from cold air. Pneumonia is not usually passed from one person to another (*contagious*). Sometimes outbreaks of pneumonia do happen, however.

SYMPTOMS

Symptoms depend on the age of the child and the type of germ. The common symptoms are:

- Cough.
- Fever.
- Chills.
- Chest pain.
- Belly (*abdominal*) pain.
- Feeling worn out when doing usual activities (*fatigue*).
- Loss of hunger (*appetite*).
- Lack of interest in play.
- Fast, shallow breathing.
- Shortness of breath.

A cough may continue for several weeks, even after the child feels better. This is the normal way the body clears up the infection.

DIAGNOSIS

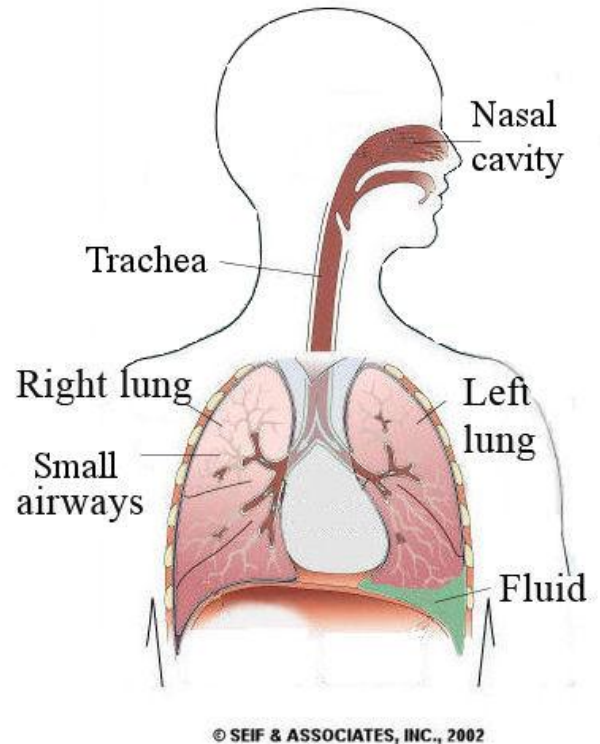
The diagnosis may be made by a physical exam. A chest x-ray may be helpful.

TREATMENT

Antibiotics are only useful for pneumonia caused by bacteria. Antibiotics do not treat viral infections. Most cases of pneumonia can be treated at home. More severe cases need hospital treatment.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Cough suppressants may be used as suggested by your caregiver. Cough is a good defense mechanism. It is the way the body clears mucus and infection out of the respiratory tract. It is often best to only use cough suppressants to allow your child to rest. For children under the age of 4 years, use cough suppressants only as told by your child's caregiver.
- If your child's caregiver prescribed an antibiotic, be sure to give the medications as directed until used up.
- Only take over-the-counter medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver. **Do not** use aspirin in children.
- A cold steam vaporizer or humidifier in your child's room may help keep the mucus loose.



- Offer your child fluids to loosen mucus.
- Be sure your child gets rest.
- Wash your hands after handling your child.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Your child's fever (if present) is not gone in 2 days.
- Your child's symptoms are worse.
- Your child's symptoms do not improve in 4 days.
- New fever develops.
- Fever returns after having been gone for a while.
- New symptoms develop.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE OR SEE YOUR CAREGIVER IF YOUR CHILD:

- Is short of breath. Watch for:
 - Rapid breathing.
 - Pulling in of the spaces between the ribs or under the ribs when breathing in.
 - Grunting when breathing out.
- Has pain with breathing.
- Has high pitched whistling noise when breathing out (*wheezing*).
- Has a temperature of 104° F (40.0° C) or higher.
- Coughs up blood.
- Throws up (*vomits*) often.
- Is worse.