

Patient education

Pneumonia

What is pneumonia?

Pneumonia is an inflammation of the lungs caused by a virus, bacteria, chemicals, or dust. Without proper medical treatment, pneumonia can be life threatening.

Treatment Goals During your Hospitalization

- teach you how to cough so that you can bring up sputum (mucus)
- lower your body temperature, if you have a fever
- have you drink plenty of fluids and eat small frequent meals
- slowly move around more every day
- teach you to balance your activities with rest periods
- teach you how to take measures to prevent the spread of infection

Treatment May Include:

- Drugs to prevent or relieve your cough, lower your fever, and help you cough up mucus from your lungs.
- Drugs to treat infection, if that is the cause of your pneumonia. These drugs may be given through an IV or by mouth.
- Oxygen to assist you to breathe easier.
- Incentive spirometry to encourage you deep breathe and help expand your lungs.
- Pneumococcal and flu vaccine.
- A number of lab tests.
- Frequent taking of your blood pressure, pulse, respiration, and temperature
- Discussion with your caregiver about your Advance Directives.

Activity vs. Rest

Activity helps your lungs to work better, so that you can begin to breathe easier. **Please don't forget that it is important to be as active as possible, even if you are confined to bed.** By doing this, your body will be able to handle more and more activity as you get better. It is important that you **give your body a break by resting often** between activities.

Diet and fluids

We recommend that you **drink eight glasses of fluid a day**, in order to thin the mucus in your lungs. Drinking a lot of water or other fluids will also reduce your high fever. If you are not drinking enough fluids, we may have to feed you fluids through an intravenous line. It is also important that you **eat nutritious foods** while you're sick, so that your body has the vitamins and minerals it needs to recover.



Measures to prevent the spread of infection

Washing your hands thoroughly with soap, and immediately **throwing your used tissues in the garbage** are two ways to prevent the spread of infection. You should **also cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze**, because germs can spread that way as well. Pneumonia can be an infectious disease, and you can cause others to get sick if you aren't careful.

Getting ready to leave the hospital

Before leaving the hospital, your physician, nurse, or discharge planner will talk with you about:

- any concerns you may have about your plans to go home.
- your medication(s) and possible side effects
- what you should be eating and drinking for your health
- balancing rest and activity, and deep breathing and coughing
- stopping smoking, if you are a smoker !
- what you can do to keep from getting pneumonia again
- follow-up appointments

When to call your physician

Once you're home, you should watch yourself for the following symptoms. They could indicate that you're getting sick again. Call your physician if:

- you have trouble breathing, especially while at rest
- your body temperature is over 101 degrees
- you have asthma or COPD and are using your metered dose inhalers more often
- you have nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea
- you have a newly developed rash
- if you keep coughing after two or three weeks

Questions

If you or your family has questions or concerns about your plans to go home, please ask us about them and we can arrange a visit from the Discharge Planner before you leave. We're here to help you recover and to teach you about your illness.