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PNEUMONIA

Prevention



Pneumonia can be very serious and even life-threatening. You can take a few steps to try and prevent it.

Vaccines can help prevent some types of pneumonia. Good hygiene (washing your hands often), [quitting smoking](#), and keeping your immune system strong by [getting regular physical activity](#) and [eating healthy](#) are other ways to lower your risk of getting pneumonia.

Vaccines

Vaccines can help prevent pneumonia caused by pneumococcus bacteria or the flu virus. Vaccines cannot prevent all cases of pneumonia. However, compared to people who don't get vaccinated, those who are vaccinated and still get pneumonia tend to have:

- Fewer serious complications
- Milder infections
- Pneumonia that doesn't last as long

Pneumococcus vaccines

Two vaccines are available to prevent infections from the pneumococcus bacteria, the most common type of bacteria that causes pneumonia. Pneumococcus vaccines are especially important for people at high risk of pneumonia, including:

- Adults age 65 or older
- Children age 2 or younger
- People who have chronic (ongoing) diseases, serious long-term health problems, or weak immune systems. This may include people who have cancer, HIV, [asthma](#), [sickle cell disease](#), or damaged or removed spleens.
- People who smoke

For more information, visit the CDC's [Pneumococcal Vaccination](#) and [Pneumococcal Vaccination: Summary of Who and When to Vaccinate](#).

Flu (influenza) vaccine

Your yearly flu vaccine can help prevent pneumonia caused by the flu. The flu vaccine is usually given in September through October, before flu season starts.

For more information about the flu vaccine, visit the CDC's [Seasonal Influenza \(Flu\) Vaccination](#) and [Who Needs a Flu Vaccine and When](#).

Hib vaccine

Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib) is a type of bacteria that can cause pneumonia and [meningitis](#). The Hib vaccine is recommended for all children under 5 years old in the United States. The vaccine often is given to infants starting when they are 2 months old.

For more information about the Hib vaccine, go to the CDC's [Hib Vaccination](#) webpage.

Other ways to prevent pneumonia

You can take the following steps to help prevent pneumonia:

- **Wash your hands** with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizers to kill germs.
- **Don't smoke.** Smoking prevents your lungs from properly filtering out and defending your body against germs. For information about how to quit smoking, visit [Smoking and Your Heart](#) and [Your Guide to a Healthy Heart](#). These resources include basic information about how to quit smoking. For free help and support, you may call the National Cancer Institute's Smoking Quitline at 1-877-44U-QUIT (1-877-448-7848).
- **Keep your immune system strong.** Get plenty of physical activity and follow a healthy eating plan. Read more about [heart-healthy living](#).
- **If you have problems swallowing,** eat smaller meals of thickened food and sleep with the head of your bed raised up. These steps can help you avoid getting food, drink, or saliva into your lungs.
- **If you have a planned surgery,** your provider may recommend that you don't eat for 8 hours or drink liquids for 2 hours before your surgery. This can help prevent food or drink from getting into your airway while you are sedated.
- **If your immune system is impaired or weakened,** your provider may recommend you take antibiotics to prevent bacteria from growing in your lungs.

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