

Pneumonia

Pneumonia is inflammation of the lungs, usually caused by an infection. Most people get better in 2 to 4 weeks, but babies, older people, and people with heart or lung conditions are at risk of getting seriously ill and may need treatment in hospital.

Treatment for pneumonia

You'll usually be given antibiotics to treat pneumonia. Most people get better in 2 to 4 weeks.

Some people are more at risk of becoming seriously ill. You may need to go to hospital for treatment if:

- you're over 65
- you have [cardiovascular disease](#) or a long-term lung condition
- your baby or young child has pneumonia
- you're very unwell

In hospital you'll usually be given fluids and antibiotics to treat the infection. You may also be given oxygen to help you breathe.

You may be sent for an [X-ray](#) of your chest and blood tests to check for other conditions.

If you're given antibiotics to take at home, contact your doctor if you do not feel better after taking them for 2 to 3 days.

Things you can do if you have pneumonia

There are some things you can do to help with recovery from pneumonia and reduce the risk of spreading it to other people.

Do

rest until you feel better – try to stay at home and avoid contact with other people if you have a high temperature or do not feel well enough to do normal activities

drink plenty of fluids

take [paracetamol](#) or [ibuprofen](#) to help with pain or a high temperature

cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze

put used tissues in the bin as quickly as possible

wash your hands regularly with water and soap

Don't

do not take cough medicine – coughing helps your body get rid of the infection

do not smoke

How to reduce your risk of pneumonia

There are several vaccines available to help protect you or your child from infections that can cause pneumonia:

- [pneumococcal vaccine](#) – recommended for babies, adults over 65 and people at higher risk of pneumococcal infections
- [flu vaccine](#) – recommended during pregnancy, for adults over 65, people with certain long-term health conditions and those at high risk of catching or passing on flu
- [RSV vaccine](#) – recommended for adults aged 75 to 79, and during pregnancy (from 28 weeks onwards) to help protect your baby after they're born
- [COVID-19 vaccine](#) – a seasonal vaccine that's recommended for people at increased risk from COVID-19

Can pneumonia be prevented?

Check with your healthcare provider about getting immunizations. The flu is a common cause of pneumonia. Because of that, getting a flu shot every year can help prevent both the flu and pneumonia.

There is also a pneumococcal vaccine. It will protect you from a common form of bacterial pneumonia. Children younger than age 5 and adults ages 65 and older should get this shot.

The pneumococcal shot is also recommended for all children and adults who are at increased risk of pneumococcal disease due to other health conditions.

What are the complications of pneumonia?

Most people with pneumonia respond well to treatment, but pneumonia can be very serious and even deadly.

You are more likely to have complications if you are an older adult, a very young child, have a weakened immune system, or have a serious medical problem like diabetes or cirrhosis. Complications may include

Acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS). This is a severe form of respiratory failure.

Lung abscesses. These are pockets of pus that form inside or around the lung. They may need to be drained with surgery

Respiratory failure. This requires the use of a breathing machine or ventilator.

Sepsis. This is when the infection gets into the blood. It may lead to organ failure