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PNEUMONIA

Recovery



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If you are [diagnosed](#) with pneumonia, it is important to follow your [treatment](#) plan, take steps to help your body recover, monitor your condition, and try to prevent your infection from spreading to others.


It may take time to recover from pneumonia. Some people feel better and are able to return to their normal routines in 1 to 2 weeks. For others, it can take a month or longer. Most people continue to feel tired for about a month. Talk with your healthcare provider about when you can return to your normal activities.



Learn What to Expect as You Recover From Pneumonia

NHLBI

02:21

This video shows what to expect as you recover from pneumonia and how you can improve your recovery. [Medical Animation Copyright © 2022 Nucleus Medical Media Inc. All rights reserved](#) .

Follow your treatment plan

It is important that you take all your medicines as prescribed. If you are using antibiotics, continue to take the medicine until it is all gone. You may start to feel better before you finish the medicine, but you should continue to take it. If you stop too soon, the bacterial infection and your pneumonia may come back. The pneumonia may also become resistant to the antibiotic, making treatment more difficult.

Take steps to help your body recover

The following steps can help your body recover from pneumonia.

- [Choose heart-healthy foods](#), because good nutrition helps your body recover.
- **Drink plenty of fluids** to help you stay hydrated.
- **Don't drink alcohol or use illegal drugs.** Alcohol and illegal drugs weaken your immune system and can raise the risk of pneumonia complications.

- **[Don't smoke](#)** and avoid secondhand smoke. Breathing in smoke can worsen your pneumonia. Visit [Smoking and Your Heart](#) and [Your Guide to a Healthy Heart](#). For free help quitting smoking, you may call the National Cancer Institute's Smoking Quitline at 1-877-44U-QUIT (1-877-448-7848).
- **[Get plenty of sleep](#)**. Good quality sleep can help your body rest and improve the response of your immune system. Visit [How Sleep Works](#) to get more information.
- **[Get light physical activity](#)**. Moving around can help you regain your strength and improve your recovery. However, you may still feel short of breath. Activity that is too strenuous may make you dizzy. Talk to your provider about how much activity is right for you.
- **Sit upright** to help you feel more comfortable and breathe more easily.
- **Take a couple of deep breaths** several times a day.

Monitor your condition

Ask your provider when you should schedule follow-up care. If your symptoms have not improved, your provider may use a [chest X-ray](#) to check for other conditions that may be causing them.

Your provider may suggest [pulmonary rehabilitation](#) to help you breathe better as your lungs recover. You may also need physical therapy to help you regain your strength. Physical activity can help improve your recovery.

Pneumonia can have long-term effects such as depression, and worsening heart and blood vessel diseases. Call your provider if you develop these conditions, if your symptoms suddenly get worse, or if you have trouble breathing or talking.

How can pneumonia affect your health?


Often, people who have pneumonia can be successfully [treated](#), though sometimes complications still happen. Complications are more likely if pneumonia is untreated. These complications are more common in children, older adults, and people with other serious conditions.




Learn About Possible Complications From Pneumonia

NHLBI

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*This video describes complications that can happen from pneumonia. [Medical Animation](#)
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Complications of pneumonia that may be life-threatening.

- **Acute respiratory distress ([ARDS](#)) and [respiratory failure](#)** are common complications of serious pneumonia.
- **Kidney, liver, and heart damage** develops when these organs don't get enough oxygen to work properly or when your immune system responds negatively to the infection.
- **Necrotizing pneumonia** develops when your infection causes your lung tissue to die and form lung abscesses (pockets of tissue filled with pus). It also makes your pneumonia harder to treat. You may need surgery or drainage with a needle to remove the pus.
- **[Pleural, or lung, disorders](#)** occur when the tissues that cover the outside of your lungs become inflamed and the chest cavity around your lungs fills with fluid and pus.
- **[sepsis](#)**  happens when bacteria from your lungs gets into your blood and causes inflammation throughout your body.

Take steps to protect yourself and others

The following steps can help you prevent spreading the infection to others around you.

- **Cover your nose and mouth** while coughing or sneezing.
- **Get rid of used tissues** right away.
- **Limit contact** with family and friends.
- **Wash your hands often**, especially after coughing and sneezing.

Some people get pneumonia again and again. Tell your provider if this happens.


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