

Overview

Pneumonia

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Pneumonia is inflammation of the lungs, usually caused by a bacterial infection.

Symptoms of pneumonia

Symptoms of pneumonia can start suddenly or gradually over a few days.

They include:

- a cough - it may be dry or you may cough up yellow, green or brown mucus (phlegm)
- shortness of breath
- [a high temperature](#)
- loss of appetite
- chest pain
- an aching body
- feeling very tired
- wheezing when you breathe - babies may make grunting noises
- feeling confused

Call 999, 112 or go to your nearest emergency department (ED) if:

- you're having difficulty breathing
- your lips or tongue are blue
- you feel confused

 [Find your nearest emergency department \(ED\)](#)

Contact your GP urgently if:

- you're feeling short of breath
- you have chest pain that gets worse when you breathe in or out
- you've had a cough for 3 weeks or more
- you're coughing up blood

Diagnosing pneumonia

Your GP may be able to diagnose pneumonia by:

- asking about your symptoms
- listening to your chest and back
- taking your temperature

You may need further tests such as a chest x-ray or blood tests.

[Diagnosing pneumonia](#)

Treatment for pneumonia

Your GP may prescribe you antibiotics.

Antibiotics will not help you if the pneumonia is caused by a virus. Pneumonia caused by a virus is not usually as serious as pneumonia caused by bacteria.

Treatment for pneumonia depends on how serious your symptoms are.

Mild pneumonia can usually be treated at home by:

- getting plenty of rest
- taking antibiotics
- drinking plenty of fluids

If your pneumonia is serious, you may need to be treated at the hospital.

At hospital, you will usually be given:

- antibiotics
- fluids through a drip
- oxygen to help you breathe

You may be sent for a chest x-ray and blood tests to check if you have pneumonia.

[Treatment for pneumonia](#)

Who can get pneumonia

Anyone can get pneumonia.

You can get pneumonia:

- if you have another infection such as [COVID-19 \(coronavirus\)](#)
- while you're being treated in a hospital
- by something getting into your lungs, such as water or food (aspiration pneumonia)

Higher risk for pneumonia

People at higher risk of getting pneumonia include:

- babies and young children
- older people
- people who smoke
- people with heart, lung, liver, kidney or neurological conditions such as multiple sclerosis
- people with a weak immune system
- people with [diabetes](#)

If you are at higher risk of getting pneumonia, you should get the:

- [pneumococcal vaccine](#)
- [flu vaccine](#) each year

Causes of pneumonia

Pneumonia is usually caused by a bacterial or viral infection. Bacterial pneumonia is more common.

Viruses are a common cause of [pneumonia in young children](#).

Almost all serious complications of COVID-19 feature pneumonia.

Pneumonia can also be caused by:

- fungal infection - more likely to affect people with a weakened immune system
- breathing in vomit, a foreign object such as a peanut or a harmful substance such as smoke
- using a breathing machine while being treated in hospital

Preventing pneumonia

Good hygiene will prevent germs that can cause pneumonia from spreading.

This includes:

- covering your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze
- throwing away used tissues as quickly as possible
- [washing your hands](#) regularly with water and soap

You can help reduce your risk of getting pneumonia by preventing damage to your lungs.

This includes:

- [quitting smoking](#)
- [avoiding or cutting down alcohol use](#)

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