

Knowing the Difference between Bronchitis and Pneumonia

Bronchitis and pneumonia is not synonymous. However, both are diseases affecting the lower respiratory system. Typically, it affects the airways going to the lungs, so it is imperative that a person should learn the major differences of the diseases to have a better understanding.

A severe lung infection is called pneumonia. The alveoli are filled with other liquid and pus. Thus the normal flow of oxygen is blocked. The blood is then getting less amounts of oxygen. In the absence of oxygen in your body, the cells fail to work properly. Proper treatment should be given, because less supply of oxygen and widespread infection can lead to death.

There are several factors which cause pneumonia, but the major cause of pneumonia is bacteria. The symptoms may include a headache, severe fatigue, loss of appetite, excessive sweating, skin is clammy when touched, and some degree of confusion.

- Streptococcus pneumoniae is a bacterium affecting twenty to sixty percent of adults and thirteen to thirty percent of children. This type of pneumonia is considered as community-acquired. Streptococcus classified as Group A or streptococcus pyogenes also causes pneumonia.

- Staphylococcus aureus is responsible for acquired pneumonias in hospitals affecting ten to fifteen percent of people. This is often linked with patients having a weak immune system and viral influenza.

- Another bacteria present in cases of community-acquired pneumonias, people having chronic lung diseases, and children having cystic fibrosis is the gram-negative bacteria.

- Viral causes include RSV (respiratory syncytial virus), HPV (human parainfluenza virus), SARS (severe acute respiratory distress syndrome), herpesviruses, influenza, and adenoviruses.

There are several types of pneumonia which you should also learn.

- Bacterial organisms cause atypical pneumonias including the walking pneumonia. A mild symptom like dry cough is apparent. However, hospital care is not needed.

- Aspiration pneumonia is a condition wherein the bacteria are present in the mouth. It is harmless if it stays there. But if gag reflex weakens, bacteria can penetrate your lungs causing the infection.
- Opportunistic pneumonia is harmless as long as the immune system is healthy. It can be harmful for people with vulnerable immune systems especially to illness and infection.
- Regional and occupational pneumonias are caused by exposure to chemicals. People who are exposed to cattle are at high risk of getting pneumonia due to anthrax.

Bronchitis is a disease affecting the bronchi. It is responsible for carrying the air from your trachea into your lungs. Inflammation due to irritation and infection can damage the cells on the bronchi areas. Normally, these cells contain cilia which remove and trap foreign particles that you breathe every day.

Blockage of the cilia causes obstruction on the airways increasing the irritation since the debris cannot easily flow. Mucus is then produced resembling to that of a cough. It makes the airways more vulnerable to infection and damages the tissue if irritation continues. Bronchitis has two types.

- Acute bronchitis can last for ten days. This is often accompanied by a severe flu or cold. Take note, bronchitis can start without any infection.
- Chronic bronchitis can last for three months or above. The symptoms are recurrent. So it must be always checked because it can threaten your life. This condition may also occur from a series attacks of acute bronchitis. It may also gradually develop because of inhaling dirty air or heavy smoking.

Viruses affect approximately ninety percent of people with acute bronchitis. Other cases are caused by repetitive exposures to irritants including smoke. This may develop chronic bronchitis. Using antibiotic is not effective because it cannot eradicate irritants or viral illnesses. It can only be effective with bacterial diseases. Moreover, you should never be confused of an asthma which produces significant amounts of cough and little wheezing. Often it is misdiagnosed as acute bronchitis.

The therapies that are most effective in treating bronchitis is being patient, avoid irritants, and maintain good nutrition. Some cases of viral bronchitis can last from eight to twelve weeks. Chronic bronchitis which is considered severe

causes bronchi dilation. This makes the condition more susceptible to bacterial and severe infections caused by drugs.

It is very important to determine the differences between pneumonia and bronchitis. Health is very important thus proper diagnosis is essential for acquiring proper treatment.