

Pneumonia



This information from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is for Veterans, their families, friends, volunteers, and employees. It describes pneumonia symptoms and prevention.

Pneumonia

- Is an infection of one or both lungs.
- Is the most common complication of influenza (flu) in adults.
- Can cause mild to severe illness in people of all ages.

Symptoms

- Fever
- Chills
- Coughing
- Fatigue
- Difficulty breathing

Risk Groups

- Adults age 65 years or older
- Persons with certain chronic illnesses or conditions including asthma, diabetes or heart disease
- Persons with a weakened immune system
- Smokers
- Children younger than 5 years of age

How Pneumonia Spreads

- When a person with pneumonia sneezes, coughs, talks, or laughs, germs can spread into the air.
- The germs can spread to people and surfaces up to 6 feet away.
- Germs can spread to your hands if you touch anything that has the germs on it.
- If you then touch your eyes, nose or mouth before cleaning your hands, the germs can get into your body and you might get pneumonia.
- Can occur after contact with germs in your community or during a stay in a healthcare facility.

Pneumonia causes about 1 million hospitalizations and about 50,000 deaths each year in the U.S.

Treatment

- Many people will need treatment in a hospital.
- Follow treatment from your healthcare provider.
- If prescribed antibiotics, always finish them.

Prevention

- Get your flu shot every year. Pneumonia is the most common complication of flu.
- Ask your healthcare provider if you need a pneumococcal vaccination. Pneumococcal bacteria can cause severe pneumonia.

- Avoid contact with people who have a cold or flu.
- Clean hands often.
- Keep hands away from your face, eyes, and mouth.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes.
- If you are in a healthcare facility, it is OK to ask healthcare workers if they have cleaned their hands.
- Stay home when sick and limit contact with others.
- Ask your healthcare provider for help to stop smoking.
- Avoid cigarette smoke.



WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?

www.cdc.gov/pneumonia

www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/pneumonia.html

www.cdc.gov/pneumococcal/about/symptoms-complications.html

www.vaccines.gov/diseases/pneumonia/index.html

www.vaccines.gov/diseases/flu/index.html



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