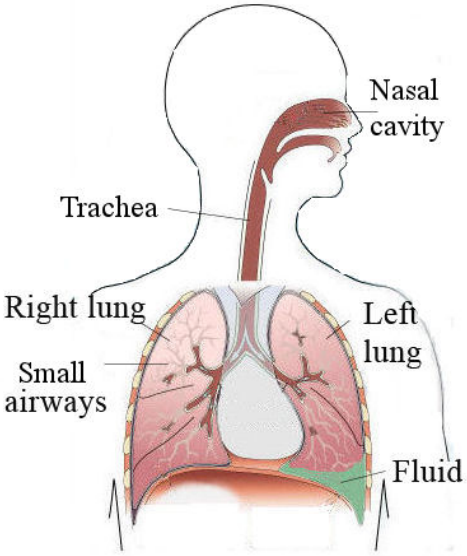
Pneumonia, Pediatric

Pneumonia is an infection of the lungs. There are many different types of pneumonia. The type depends on:
- What parts of the lungs are infected.
- What germs are causing the infection.



© SEIF & ASSOCIATES, INC., 2002

Pneumonia is not usually passed from one person to another (*contagious*). However, outbreaks of pneumonia do happen.

CAUSES

Pneumonia can be caused by many types of germs. The most common types of pneumonia are caused by:
- Viruses.
- Bacteria.

SYMPTOMS

Symptoms depend on the age of the child and the type of germ. The common symptoms are:
- Cough.
- Fever.
- Chills.
- Chest pain.
- Belly (*abdominal*) pain.
- Feeling worn out when doing usual activities (*fatigue*).
- Loss of hunger (*appetite*).
- Lack of interest in play.
- Fast, shallow breathing.
- Shortness of breath.

A cough may continue for several weeks even after the child feels better. This is the normal way the body clears out the infection.

DIAGNOSIS

The diagnosis may be made by a physical exam. A chest X-ray may be helpful.

TREATMENT

Medicines (*antibiotics*) that kill germs are only useful for pneumonia caused by bacteria. Antibiotics do not treat viral infections. Most cases of pneumonia can be treated at home. More severe cases need hospital treatment.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Cough suppressants may be used as directed by your caregiver. Keep in mind that coughing helps clear mucus and infection out of the respiratory tract. It is best to only use cough suppressants to allow your child to rest. For children under the age of 4 years, use cough suppressants **only** as directed by your child's caregiver.
- If your child's caregiver prescribed an antibiotic, be sure to give the medicine as directed until all the medicine is gone.
- Only take over-the-counter medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver. **Do not give aspirin to children.**
- Put a cold steam vaporizer or humidifier in your child's room. This may help keep the mucus loose.
- Offer your child fluids to loosen the mucus.

- Be sure your child gets rest.
- Wash your hands after handling your child.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Your child has an oral temperature above 102° F (38.9° C).
- Your baby is older than 3 months with a rectal temperature of 100.5º F (38.1° C) or higher for more than 1 day.
- Your child's symptoms do not improve in 4 days.
- New symptoms develop.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Your child is breathing fast.
- The spaces between the ribs or under the ribs pull in when your child breathes in.
- Your child is short of breath and there is grunting when breathing out.
- Your child has pain with breathing.
- Your child makes a high-pitched whistling noise when breathing out (*wheezing*).
- Your child coughs up blood.
- Your child throws up (*vomits*) often.
- Your child gets worse.
- Your child has an oral temperature above 102° F (38.9° C), not controlled by medicine.
- Your baby is older than 3 months with a rectal temperature of 102º F (38.9º C) or higher.
- **Your baby is 3 months old or younger with a rectal temperature of 100.4º F (38º C) or higher.**

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch this condition.
- Will get help right away if your child is not doing well or gets worse.

Document Released: 10/17/2005 Document Re-Released: 03/14/2011
ExitCare® Patient Information ©2011 ExitCare, LLC.