

# WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT COMMUNITY-ACQUIRED PNEUMONIA

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## What Is Pneumonia?

Pneumonia is a serious infection of the lungs.

Community-acquired pneumonia is a type of pneumonia that you develop outside of a hospital or nursing home. It is most commonly caused by bacteria, but viruses can also cause it. Risk factors for pneumonia include:

- Being 65 years or older
- Eating a poor diet
- Drinking alcohol
- Smoking cigarettes
- Having influenza (the “flu”)
- Having a weakened immune system, such as from old age or a serious disease, like HIV or cancer
- Having periods of time where you lost consciousness, such as from anesthesia, drinking too much, drug use, stroke, and seizure

## What Are the Warning Signs of Pneumonia?

- Long-lasting cough, which can sometimes bring up mucus
- Feeling cold and shaky
- Fever
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pains
- Feeling tired and weak

## How Is Pneumonia Diagnosed?

- Your doctor will ask you questions about your symptoms and give you a physical examination. He or she will listen to your lungs and heart and check your temperature.
- Your doctor will usually order a chest X-ray to see how much your lungs are affected.
- Your doctor may also order tests of the sputum (mucous brought up with coughing) and urine to learn what type of bacteria is causing the pneumonia. A blood test can show if the infection has spread from the lungs to the blood.

## How Is Pneumonia Treated?

- If your pneumonia is caused by bacteria, your doctor will prescribe antibiotics. Your symptoms usually start to go away within a few days of starting treatment. It is important to finish all of your antibiotics, even if you are feeling better.



- Drink lots of fluids to make sure you stay hydrated.
- Your doctor may prescribe medicines for cough and to reduce fever. Feeling tired and coughing may last for up to a month or longer before going away.
- Most patients are treated at home, but some who are very ill or who have a greater risk for complications may have to stay in the hospital.
- If you have to stay in the hospital, doctors will monitor your heart and breathing rates, oxygen levels, and temperature. You may also be given fluids and medicines through your veins (intravenously).

## Questions for My Doctor

- Am I contagious?
- What can I do to help relieve my symptoms?
- Why do I still feel so tired?
- How can I prevent another episode of pneumonia?
- Should I be treated at home or in the hospital?
- When can I start my normal activities again?
- When can I go back to work?

## Bottom Line

- Pneumonia is a serious infection of the lungs. It is most commonly caused by bacteria.
- Symptoms include shortness of breath, coughing, chest pains, high fever, and feeling cold and shaky.
- Treatment usually includes antibiotic medicines, medicines for cough and fever, drinking lots of fluids, and rest.
- Some people may need to stay in the hospital if the infection is more serious or if pneumonia does not go away.

For More Information



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### Medline Plus

[www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000145.htm](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000145.htm)

### American Lung Association

[www.lung.org/lung-disease/pneumonia/symptoms-diagnosisand.html](http://www.lung.org/lung-disease/pneumonia/symptoms-diagnosisand.html)