What are the Causes of Pneumonia?

Pneumonia is an inflammation in one or more parts of your lungs. Pneumonia may be caused by either a bacteria or virus. Pneumonia affects people differently depending on age, general health, and the type of bacteria or virus.

Your Hospital Stay

You may stay in the hospital for 1 – 4 days.

Understanding Your Medications

- It is very important that your doctor(s), health care providers, and pharmacist know all of the medications you are currently taking. This includes prescription drugs, over-the-counter medications, dietary supplements, vitamins, and herbal remedies.

- Antibiotics are medicines given intravenously (IV) or by mouth (pill) to treat bacterial pneumonia. If you are able to tolerate solid foods or fluids, the IV antibiotics may be changed to pills after the first or second day of your hospital stay.

- Once you go home, it is important to take all of the pills prescribed by your doctor; otherwise, the pneumonia infection may come back.

- The antibiotic you are given will depend on the type of bacteria causing your pneumonia. Be sure to report any allergies you might have to antibiotics.

Possible Side Effects of Antibiotics

- Common side effects of antibiotic therapy include nausea, diarrhea, itchy skin, rash or redness, swelling, or hives. Be sure to tell your nurse or doctor if you have any of these symptoms.
Managing Your Pain

Pneumonia does not usually cause pain. However, you may experience rib discomfort from vigorous coughing. Check with your doctor about whether you should use a cough suppressant. You may also want to use a pillow to support your abdomen when you cough.

In addition, you may have pain from another pre-existing medical condition. If you are having pain, it is important to take action to control your pain as soon as the pain starts. Managing pain early and adequately is important in effective pain control. Please be sure to let your doctor or nurse know if you are having pain.

Your Tests & Treatments

- You will have a chest X-ray to assist your doctor in the diagnosis of your pneumonia.
- You may have a blood test(s).
- The level of oxygen in your blood (oxygen saturation) will be checked to see if you need oxygen. To check the oxygen level, a device similar to a clothespin-like clip is attached to your finger. You may receive oxygen, if needed.

About Your Diet

- Depending on your condition, you may receive IV fluids.
- Try to maintain your usual diet. Eating a well-balanced diet is important for your recovery.
- In general, it is a good idea to drink 4 – 6 glasses of liquid a day, unless you are on restricted fluids.

Planning Your Activity

- In general, sitting in a chair and walking is good for your lungs. You need to be up as much as you can tolerate without getting too tired.
- Balance rest periods with activity during the day. Pace yourself. Try to be out of bed and active without becoming too tired.
- Pneumonia affects each person differently. Talk with your doctor about when to return to your usual activities such as driving, working, and exercising. Keep in mind that it can take up to a month to get your strength back after having pneumonia.
Setting Up Help at Home

An RN Case Manager will meet with you if you need extra help or equipment at home. The RN Case Manager will help you find out what services your insurance plan pays for and, if needed, will help arrange them.

Tips for Your Recovery

- Pace yourself during your recovery. Try to be out of bed and active without becoming too tired. Take full, deep breaths. This is easier if you are sitting upright.
- **If you smoke, there are resources to help you quit. Call 1-800-NO-BUTTS, or ask your nurse or doctor for information about how you can quit smoking.**
- Keep up to date on your vaccinations. Often, pneumonia can be prevented by getting a flu vaccination each fall and a vaccine for pneumococcal pneumonia once every 5 – 10 years. Ask your health care provider about these vaccines.

Recognizing Danger Signals

**Call Your Doctor if You Have Any of the Following Symptoms**

- Fever over 101 °F / 38.3 °C or chills.
- Severe or increased coughing.
- New or worsening shortness of breath.
- Increased sputum production from clear (or pale yellow) to green (or a darker color).
- You become short of breath at rest or with less activity than usual.
- Irritation and a white, patchy coating in your mouth.

**Note:** If you have any questions, or problems not covered by these instructions, call your doctor.
More Ways to Learn

- Go to www.cpmc.org/learning
- Visit our Community Health Resource Center
  2100 Webster Street, San Francisco, (415) 923-3155
  Services include classes and written information on a wide variety of health topics, including smoking cessation

Frequently Asked Questions

| Question: If your doctor prescribes antibiotics for a bacterial pneumonia, why is it important to follow through and take all of the prescribed medication? |
| Answer: If you are taking antibiotics for a bacterial pneumonia, it is important to take all of the pills prescribed by your doctor; otherwise, the infection may come back. |

| Question: What are some important tips on recovering from pneumonia? |
| Answer: Tips for recovery include: (1) Pace yourself during your recovery. Try to be out of bed and active without becoming too tired; (2) Stop smoking. Talk to your doctor or nurse for suggestions on how to quit smoking; (3) Keep up to date on vaccinations (for example, flu and pneumococcal vaccines). |

| Question: What can I do to prevent a pneumonia? |
| Answer: Keep up to date on your vaccinations. Often, pneumonia can be prevented by getting a flu vaccination each fall and a vaccine for pneumococcal pneumonia once every 5-10 years. |

Developed by the Center for Patient and Community Education in association with the Department of Outcomes Management at California Pacific Medical Center. Last updated: 12/05

© 2002 - 2008 California Pacific Medical Center

Funded by: A generous donation from the Mr. and Mrs. Arthur A. Ciocca Foundation.

Note: This information is not meant to replace any information or personal medical advice which you get directly from your doctor(s). If you have any questions about this information, such as the risks or benefits of the treatment listed, please ask your doctor(s).
Your Care Instructions

The Pneumovax vaccine can prevent some of the serious complications of pneumonia, such as infection in the bloodstream (bacteremia) or throughout the body (septicemia). It is used only for adults and children older than 2 years.

Doctors recommend the Pneumovax vaccine for people over 65 years of age and for people who have a long-term illness such as diabetes, heart disease, liver disease, or lung disease. It also can help people who have a weakened immune system, such as cancer patients and people without a spleen. The immune system helps your body fight infection and other illnesses.

The vaccine is given as a shot, usually in the arm. Healthy older adults get the shot once. Other people may need to have it every 5 years. The shot may cause pain and redness at the injection site. It can also cause a mild fever for a short time.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It’s also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- Take an over-the-counter pain medicine, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), or naproxen (Aleve), if your arm is sore after the shot. Read and follow all instructions on the label.
- Give acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) to your child for pain or fussiness after the shot. Read and follow all instructions on the label. Do not give aspirin to anyone younger than 20. It has been linked to Reye’s syndrome, a serious illness.
- Put ice or a cold pack on the sore area for 10 to 15 minutes at a time. Put a thin cloth between the ice and your skin.

When should you call for help?

Call 911 anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You have severe problems breathing or swallowing.
- You have a seizure.

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You get hives.
- You have a fever.
- You have any unusual reaction after getting the shot.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if you have any problems.