

Pneumonia –EECU discharge instructions

What is pneumonia?

Pneumonia is an infection of the lung that causes fluid to collect in the air sacs (alveoli). Symptoms include:

- > breathing hard (respiratory distress)
- > breathing fast
- > sometimes pain when breathing
- > coughing
- > fever, sometimes with chills.

Most rattley breathing is not pneumonia. Your child needs to see a doctor to check if he or she has pneumonia.

What is the cause?

About 80% of pneumonia cases are caused by viruses and 20% by bacteria.

Viral pneumonia (sometimes called viral pneumonitis) is usually milder than bacterial pneumonia and cannot be treated with antibiotics. Treatment of this kind of pneumonia is extra drinks (fluids), rest and pain relief (eg paracetamol). Sometimes viral pneumonia is severe and the child needs to be in hospital for intravenous (IV) fluids and oxygen, but this is not very common.

Bacterial pneumonia tends to come on more suddenly and usually causes higher fevers (often over 40°C). Usually antibiotics help with this kind of pneumonia.

Pneumonia is usually a result of a cold. Although colds can be passed from person to person, bacterial pneumonia does not pass from person to person (it is not considered contagious).

Why was my child admitted to the hospital?

Your child was admitted to the Emergency Extended Care Unit with a type of pneumonia (e.g. *viral pneumonia; right middle lobe bronchopneumonia*).

The main reason for this admission was the need for:

- Intravenous (IV) antibiotics through a drip
- Intravenous fluids (for vomiting or poor intake)
- Oxygen
- Other

How long will my child be sick?

Once antibiotics have been started, children with bacterial pneumonia should improve within 24 to 48 hours, although they will take 7-10 days to completely recover.

Children with viral pneumonia may remain unwell for 2 to 4 weeks. The recovery from viral pneumonia is slower but children get better fully.

If your child has pneumonia once he or she is unlikely to get it again.

How can I take care of my child at home?

Antibiotics

Your child's antibiotic is

_____.

Give _____mg (_____mL/tabs)

every _____ hours.

Continue the antibiotic for _____ days.



Give all of the medicine even if your child is feeling better.

Medicines for fever

Fever does not always need to be treated. It is the body's natural response to infection and helps to fight the infection. If your child is miserable and unwell with a fever over 38.5°C, you may use paracetamol (eg Pandadol) or ibuprofen (eg Nurofen) to help with these symptoms. These medicines can also help if there is chest pain. Paracetamol can be given every 4 to 6 hours or ibuprofen can be given every 6 to 8 hours (follow the instructions on the packet). Do not give both medicines.

Coughing spasms

Coughing spasms are often caused by sticky secretions (mucus) in the back of the throat. Warm drinks usually relax the airway and loosen the secretions. Offer your child warm water, milk, cordial or apple juice. Children over 1 year old can try honey, which can soothe a cough. Encourage your child to have lots to drink.

Breathing warm moist air also helps to loosen sticky mucus. You could place a warm wet face-washer loosely over your child's nose and mouth. Or you can fill a humidifier with warm water and have your child breathe in the warm mist it produces. Avoid steam vaporizers because they can cause burns.

Don't give medicines to stop the coughing (cough-suppressant medicines such as ones containing dextromethorphan) to children with pneumonia. The mucus needs to be coughed up. Your doctor may suggest using these cough medicines only before bedtime if the cough is so bad that your child cannot sleep.

No smoking

Tobacco smoke makes coughing worse and makes coughs last longer. Don't let anyone smoke around your child. Try not to let anybody smoke inside your home.

Remind a teenager with pneumonia that if he or she smokes, the cough will last weeks longer.

Other medicines

Other instructions

When should my child be seen again?

- Your child needs to be rechecked in _____ days. Please call your child's doctor today to make an appointment.
- Your child needs to be rechecked in the Paediatric Emergency Department Fellow Clinic and has an appointment on

_____ at
_____ with Dr

_____.
Please bring your appointment card and check in with the Triage Nurse.

- Your child will need an x-ray done in 4-6 weeks to make sure there is no scarring of the lungs. You will be given an x-ray form today – please take this to the x-ray department on the 2nd floor on the morning of your followup visit. The x-ray should be done about 1 hour before your appointment time so the doctor can see the results.
- Your child has been referred to

_____. You will be called in a few days with your appointment date and time.



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- A follow-up appointment is not necessary. See your doctor if you have any concerns.

When should my child be seen by a doctor?

Urgently if:

- > If your child is finding it harder to breathe.
- > The fever returns.
- > If your child is unable to drink.
- > Your child seems very sick.

During office hours if:

- > You have other questions or concerns.

For more information

Paediatric Emergency Department

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