

What I Need to Know About Pneumonia

Pneumonia is a lung infection. Symptoms include fever, chills, sweats, cough, pain with breathing or coughing, and shortness of breath. You might also have a headache or feel tired. You might not feel like eating. Contact your prescriber right away if you have these symptoms.

If you have pneumonia, you will take one or two antibiotics. Your prescriber or pharmacist can fill in the antibiotic names, doses, and directions for you below. You will be taking:

Start taking the antibiotic as soon as possible. Don't miss doses. Ask what to do if you miss a dose.

Take the antibiotic until it is gone, even if you feel better. Your prescriber will probably want you to take your other medications as usual. If you have a chronic disease like diabetes, or lung or heart disease, keep it under good control.

Your prescriber might also want you to:

- Drink fluids to avoid dehydration.
- Avoid alcohol and cough and cold medicines.
- Take deep breaths and cough at least each hour.
- Use a humidifier to make warm, moist air.
- Avoid smoking.
- Rest. If resting in bed, turn over or get up at least every hour while awake.
- Take acetaminophen (*Tylenol*, others), ibuprofen (*Motrin IB*, others), or naproxen (*Aleve*, others) for fever or pain.

If any of these things happen, call your prescriber at _____. If you cannot reach him or her, get medical attention right away.

- New or worsening shortness of breath.
- New or worsening pain with breathing or coughing.
- Chest pain.
- Confusion.
- Blue lips.
- You cough up bloody or rust-colored mucus.
- Shaking chills, night sweats, or fever that is new, worsens, or doesn't improve.

Follow up with your prescriber on _____.

To prevent future episodes of pneumonia, you should:

- Get a flu shot every year.
- Ask your prescriber if a pneumonia shot is right for you.
- If you smoke, quit.
- Stay healthy. Get lung disease, heart disease, and diabetes under control.
- Wash your hands often. Practice good hygiene.

[This handout may not cover all possible information. It does not replace the need for professional medical care. Always follow the instructions from your healthcare provider.] [November 2013 (last reviewed November 2019); 291205]