What kinds of treatments are available?

First consult a doctor if you think you might have pneumonia. There are many common treatments available for pneumonia that a doctor can recommend. These treatments can include:

- Antibiotics
- Cough medicine to help relieve symptoms
- Pain relievers to ease chest pain
- Bed rest
- 8 glasses of water or more each day

How can I prevent Pneumonia?

To avoid pneumonia, the most important thing you can do is to take care of your health and see a doctor regularly. It can also help to receive a **flu shot,** as pneumonia is a common complication of the flu.

There is also a **pneumonia vaccine** shot that is often recommended for high risk individuals. While it does not protect against all types of pneumonia, it can prevent the most common forms of the disease.

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Pneumonia

BREATHE CALIFORNIA
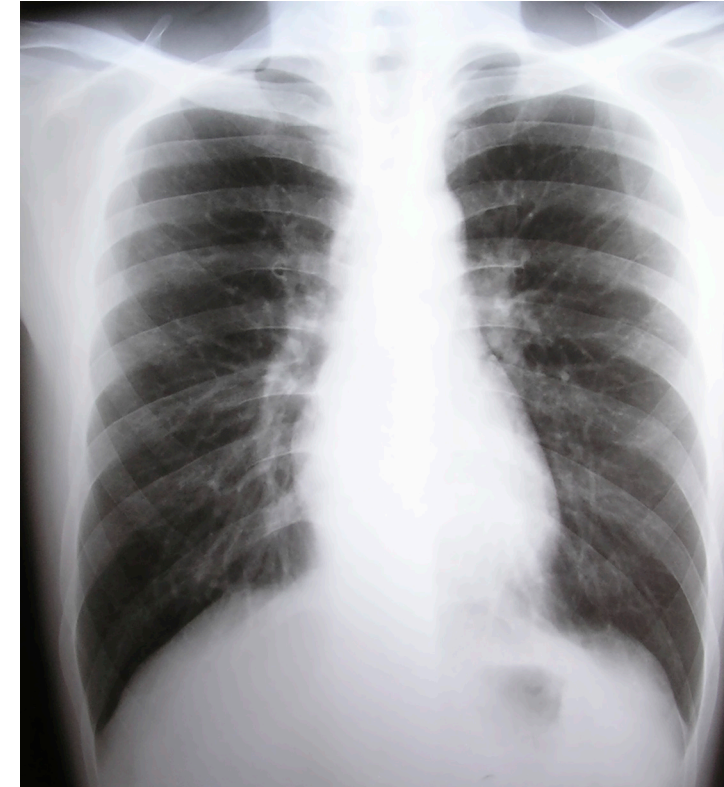
What is Pneumonia?

Pneumonia (noo-**mohn**-yuh) is a very common illness caused by a serious infection or inflammation of the lungs.

When harmful germs get past the lungs' defense systems and start to multiply, they may cause an infection in the lungs known as pneumonia. This infection prevents air from getting deep into the lungs, making it difficult for oxygen to get to the blood stream. Without the right amount of oxygen in the blood stream, blood cells cannot work properly. As a result, pneumonia can have a serious impact on the entire body.
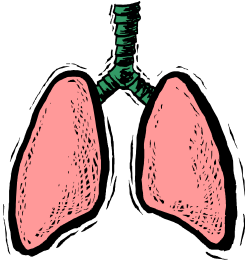
FAST FACT

About 3 million people get pneumonia each year, 5% of whom will die as a result.

Source: National Center for Health Statistics, 2002

The severity of pneumonia depends on what type of organism or germ is involved. Bacteria, viruses or other organisms can cause the infection. Suffering from pneumonia often feels like having the flu with chest pain and shortness of breath. Pneumonia symptoms can vary from mild to severe and can even cause death.

How do I know if I have Pneumonia?

If you think you have pneumonia, you should see your physician immediately. Pneumonia often feels like a cold or flu at first, which makes it hard to realize that you might have contracted the more serious illness.

The four main symptoms of pneumonia include:

- Coughing
- Fever
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain

You may also have chills, lack of energy, weakness, quick breathing, headache, muscle aches, blueness around the lips and nails as well as confusion.

Pneumonia

Trachea

Bronchi
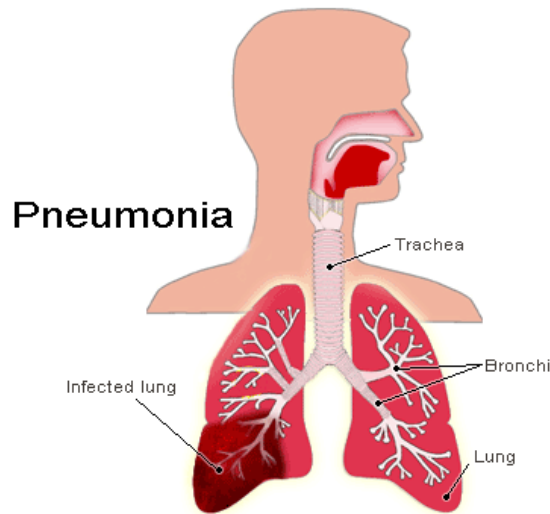
Infected lung

Lung

What causes Pneumonia?

Pneumonia can be caused by more than 30 different germs or organisms. They can enter the lungs through droplets that are inhaled when an infected individual coughs or sneezes. Pneumonia can also develop when bacteria or viruses that are normally in the mouth, throat or nose accidentally enter the lung(s). In addition, a cold or flu can create an environment in the lungs for pneumonia-causing agents to move in and cause an infection.

Pneumonia is commonly misdiagnosed as bronchitis because many of the signs and symptoms are extremely similar.

Healthy individuals can normally fight off these viruses or bacteria, but if the person is not healthy or has a weak immune system, pneumonia can develop. Older adults are also at a greater risk for suffering from pneumonia.

FAST FACT

Pneumonia is the 6th leading cause of death in the US and the leading cause of death among the elderly.

Source: National Center for Health Statistics, 2002