A Patient's Guide to Pneumonia

Education and wellness
What is pneumonia?

Pneumonia is an inflammation of your lungs, usually caused by an infection. There are many different types of pneumonia, most are caused by a bacteria, virus, or fungus. Pneumonia can be a complication of another illness, such as the flu, when your body is already in a weakened state.
Your pneumonia treatment plan

Treating your lungs:
• Some people who have pneumonia can be treated at home with prescribed antibiotics and some people will need to be in the hospital for pulmonary assessments and interventions, and will be on antibiotics. Your physician will decide if you can stay at home or need to be treated at the hospital and will discuss your treatment plan with you.

IF you are hospitalized:
• It is our goal to get you well enough to leave the hospital after three days of treatment. If your symptoms of pneumonia continue to improve, you may be ready to go home on the fourth day of your hospitalization. Please remember this is just a guideline so some patients may go home earlier and others later. The most important thing is that you go home when your team feels you are well enough to go home.
• The biggest defense against pneumonia is frequent hand washing or using an alcohol based hand sanitizer to decrease every day germs. Brushing your teeth and using mouth wash twice a day is an essential part of keeping healthy.
• Flu and pneumonia vaccinations will be discussed by your care team and flu vaccine will be given to patients who meet criteria. Your health care team will recommend the pneumococcal vaccine for those eligible patients.
• Be sure to take care of yourself by not smoking or being around cigarette smoke, eating healthy foods, getting plenty of rest, and exercising every day.

Staying healthy:
• Quit smoking
• Take your medications as prescribed
• Prevent infection by hand washing, brushing your teeth and vaccines as prescribed by your care team
What Color Am I Today?

GREEN ZONE: “All Clear” - GOAL

I am doing well today
• Slight to no shortness of breath
• Usual activity and exercise level
• Temperature below 100°Fahrenheit
• Slight cough and sputum
• No chest pain
• Able to sleep comfortably
• You are able to hydrate

YELLOW ZONE: TAKE ACTION!

I am still feeling poorly
• Fever 101°Fahrenheit or higher
• I have less energy for my daily activities
• I have more shortness of breath
• Worsening cough
• My sputum has changed color
• I am not drinking or eating much
• I feel more tired than when I was in the hospital

RED ZONE: “EMERGENCY”

I need urgent medical care
• Increased difficulty in breathing
• My breathing does not get better if I sit down
• My chest hurts
• I feel more confused and I am having trouble thinking
• I am coughing up blood

Primary Doctor: ____________________________
Phone Number: ____________________________
Pharmacy: ________________________________
Phone Number: ____________________________
What to do:
- My infection is being treated
- The medications are working that help fight infection – continue taking them!
- Brush your teeth twice a day
- Continue regular exercise and diet plan
- Follow instructions from your doctor
- Continue to wash your hands regularly, before meals

What to do: You may need to have your medication adjusted. Call your doctor if your symptoms do not improve:
Name: _______________________________________________________
Phone Number: ______________________________________________

Call your home care nurse:
Company: ____________________________________________________
Nurse: _______________________________________________________
Phone Number: ______________________________________________

What to do:
- Call 911 or
- Get help and go to the emergency room

Machine/Oxygen Help Company: ________________________________
Phone Number: ______________________________________________
Medication: “Just ask!”

What do I do if I miss a dose of medication?

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

Is my pharmacy able to fill my inhaled medications?

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

Do I have any medication changes? If the answer is yes “Would you please write down the changes for me?”

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________
Are there any side effects to the medications I should know about?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Are herbal remedies, vitamins, supplements or teas safe to take with my prescribed medications?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Can I take all my medications together and what is the proper sequence?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Exercise and Keeping Active

Keep active. Exercise is an important part of your treatment.

If you are prescribed oxygen with activity make sure to wear it at the prescribed flow rate. Check your oxygen saturation before you begin to exercise and when you are done.

Stretching

- It is important to stretch before and after aerobic activity
- Do each stretch for 1-3 repetitions
- Hold each stretch for 10 seconds and work up to a 20-second hold, do not bounce

Aerobic exercises:

Goal: 30 minutes, 3-5 times a week

- Start slowly by walking around your house and increase your time gradually by small increments (i.e. add 1-2 minutes to your time every day until you reach 30 minutes)
- As you get stronger, walk outdoors, at the shopping mall or a gym/community center
- If your prefer, ride a stationary bike or treadmill following the same guidelines
- Remember it is ok to feel moderately short of breath. It is a sign that you are pushing yourself but you should stop and rest if you feel severely short of breath
Strength training:

Goal: 12-15 repetitions, 3 times a week (every other day)
- You can strengthen your muscles from a sitting position
- Use light weights if you have them. Water bottles or soup cans can be just as effective for upper body exercises.

Upper body:
- Bicep curls
- Elbow extensions (for triceps)
- Rowing (for shoulders and back)
- Lateral raises

Lower body:
- Seated leg extension
- Leg lift – knee up to a 90-degree angle
- Sit to stands, 10-15 reps (if you don’t feel strong enough, hold onto a counter and do knee bends, 10-15 reps)
Take Care of Your Emotional Health and Manage Stress

Take time to relax
It is important to know that your body needs relaxation to reduce stress and help prevent any difficulty in breathing. Try and plan for 20 minutes a day. Get positioned comfortably in silence or listen to soft music. Consider a yoga or meditation class. Also remember that pursed lip and diaphragmatic breathing can also be relaxing.

Stop Smoking
Quitting smoking is the most important thing you can do to help COPD from getting worse.

Remember you don’t have to quit alone.
• Talk to your healthcare provider about your plans to quit. Ask about products that can help in your plan to quit.
• Join a support group
• Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW for additional support

There is no safe tobacco
All forms of tobacco including e-cigarettes, cigar or pipe contain nicotine and other chemicals that harm your body and lungs. No delivery method is safe for your health.
Start the Conversation

Who do you trust to speak for you if you can’t speak for yourself? Have you asked them?

What would you want them to say for you? Choosing a “healthcare representative” can help. A healthcare representative is a person you trust to make sure your wishes are carried out if you are unable to speak for yourself.

If you have an advanced directive, please give a copy to your care team. If you do not have an advanced directive, please ask your care team how you can begin completing one.

Some things to keep in mind to plan for the future:
• An advance directive (A healthcare representative and/or a living will) can help your family and medical team in medical emergencies
• They are used only when you cannot speak for yourself
• Everyone should have an advance directive

If you want to understand more about advance care planning there is a website that is simple and easy to use to help you think about the medical care you might need in the future. To learn more visit: www.prepareforyourcare.org

Connecticut has free templates on the internet

Just ask your provider:
If you are having trouble starting this conversation, the palliative care team can support you in this process.
Using Oxygen Safely

**Oxygen “Do’s”**

- Keep yourself and your oxygen away from anything that could cause a fire. This includes matches, candles, cigarettes, gas burners, fireplaces and other sources of open flame or sparks

- Keep oxygen unit at least five feet away from heat sources, such as space heaters, furnaces, and radiators

- Turn your oxygen off when not in use

- Have working smoke detectors, fire extinguishers and Carbon Monoxide (CO) detectors

- Have a backup tank or concentrators that run on batteries in case of a power outage

**Oxygen “Don’ts”**

- Don’t smoke and don’t allow others to smoke in your house

- Don’t use aerosol sprays near oxygen unit as aerosols are very flammable

- Don’t use vapor rubs, petroleum jelly, or oil-based hand lotion as they are flammable. Use water-based products instead

- Don’t use oxygen while using a gas stove or grill

- Don’t put oil on the oxygen unit

- Don’t use the unit with greasy hands