

Pneumonia - Viral

Definition

- A viral infection of the lungs

Health Information

Symptoms

- Trouble breathing
- Rapid breathing
- Coughing
- Fever

Diagnosis

- A doctor can diagnose pneumonia by listening to the chest with a stethoscope.

Cause

- Most pneumonia in children is caused by a virus. Most often, it's a complication of a cold.
- Pneumonia causes fluid to collect in the air sacs (alveoli). This can interfere with the transfer of oxygen from air to blood.
- Viral pneumonia is usually milder than bacterial pneumonia.

Prevention of Spread to Others

- Cover the nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.
- Wash hands often. After coughing or sneezing are important times.
- Most children who are exposed to viral pneumonia just get cold symptoms. A few may get pneumonia.
- There is a mild risk that it may be passed to others.

Care Advice

1. Overview:

- Most pneumonia in children is caused by viruses.
- Viral pneumonia usually is not severe.
- Coughing up mucus helps to clear the pneumonia. We don't want to turn off your child's ability to cough.
- Here is some care advice that should help.

2. Antibiotics Not Needed:

- Antibiotics are not helpful for viral pneumonia.
- They can only kill bacteria.

3. **Homemade Cough Medicine:**
 - Goal: Decrease the irritation or tickle in the throat that causes a dry cough.
 - AGE 3 months to 1 year: Give warm clear fluids to treat the cough. Examples are apple juice and lemonade. Amount: Use a dose of 1-3 teaspoons (5-15 ml). Give 4 times per day when coughing. Caution: Do not use honey until 1 year old.
 - AGE 1 year and older: Use HONEY ½ to 1 teaspoon (2-5 ml) as needed. It works as a homemade cough medicine. It can thin the secretions and loosen the cough. If you don't have any honey, you can use corn syrup.
 - AGE 6 years and older: Use COUGH DROPS to decrease the tickle in the throat. If you don't have any, you can use hard candy.
4. **Non-Prescription Cough Medicine (DM):**
 - Don't give cough suppressant medicines (such as those with dextromethorphan) to children with pneumonia.
 - Reason: We want children to cough up secretions. Coughing helps protect the lungs by clearing out germs.
 - Also, OTC cough medicines aren't approved by the FDA for children under 6 years old.
5. **Coughing Fits or Spells:**
 - Breathe warm mist (such as with shower running in a closed bathroom).
 - Give warm clear fluids to drink. Examples are apple juice and lemonade.
 - Reason: Both relax the airway and loosen up any phlegm.
6. **Fluids:**
 - Try to get your child to drink lots of fluids.
 - Goal: Keep your child well hydrated.
 - It loosens up any phlegm in the lungs. Then it's easier to cough up.
 - It also will thin out the mucus discharge from the nose.
7. **Humidifier:**
 - If the air in your home is dry, use a humidifier. Reason: Dry air makes coughs worse.
8. **Fever:**
 - For fevers above 102° F (39° C), give acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) or ibuprofen. See Dose Table. Note: Lower fevers are important for fighting infections.
 - For ALL fevers: Keep your child well hydrated. Give lots of cold fluids.
9. **Avoid Tobacco Smoke:**
 - Tobacco smoke makes coughs much worse.
10. **What to Expect:**
 - Fever usually goes away in 3 days.
 - Recovery is gradual and may take 2 to 4 weeks.
 - Recovery will be complete.
11. **Return to School:**
 - Your child can go back to school after the fever is gone.
 - Your child should also feel well enough to join in normal activities.
 - Most children who are exposed to viral pneumonia just get cold symptoms. A few may get pneumonia.

Call Your Doctor If

- Fever lasts over 3 days
- Breathing becomes difficult
- Breathing not back to normal by 1 week
- You think your child needs to be seen
- Your child becomes worse

Pediatric Care Advice

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