

Health Tips for Parents

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Does my child have pneumonia?

When a child has a cold or flu, the virus or bacteria can irritate the lungs, which then can create an environment open to infection or pneumonia.



“Pneumonia is an infection of one or both



lungs that is caused by viruses, bacteria or chemical irritants. Sometimes children with an upper respiratory infection (the common

cold) can later develop pneumonia, which affects the lower areas of the airways and can cause severe symptoms,” says Sheena Kamra, MD, a UCLA pediatrician in Torrance.

Bacterial pneumonia is caused by various bacteria that usually occurs when the body is weakened in some way – by illness, malnutrition, old age, or impaired immunity – and the bacteria works its way into the lungs.

Viral pneumonia is caused by various viruses, including influenza (flu). Early symptoms

of viral pneumonia are the same as those of bacterial pneumonia, which may be followed by increasing breathlessness, headache, muscle pain, weakness, and a worsening cough. Viral pneumonia may put a person at risk for bacterial pneumonia.

Treatment. Many patients experience mild pneumonia and may only require supportive treatment such as increased fluids, pain medication and antibiotics, which can all be administered at home. However, some cases of pneumonia can be dangerous and may require hospitalization and additional support. If you think your child may have pneumonia, he or she should be evaluated by a medical provider who may take X-rays and check oxygen levels and vital signs to determine which medications, if any, need to be prescribed.

Signs of pneumonia may include:

- Fever and sweating
- Cough/cold symptoms
- Low energy or fatigue
- Loss of appetite
- Wheezing
- Cough that produces greenish, yellow or bloody mucus
- Chest or abdominal pain that worsens with deep breathing or cough
- Rapid or difficulty with breathing
- Decreased oxygen levels



Staying healthy

“The best way to avoid getting sick is to minimize contact with other children who are sick with fever or cough symptoms and to practice good hand washing,” advises Dr. Kamra. “It is also very important to keep your child hydrated if they do become ill.”

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