

# Facts about Pneumonia

**Pneumonia is a lung infection that can be caused by viruses or bacteria.** People are at higher risk after having a cold or flu. These illnesses make it hard for your lungs to fight infection, so it's easier to get pneumonia. Having a chronic disease like asthma, heart disease, cancer, or diabetes also puts people at higher risk. Pneumococcal infection caused by *Streptococcus pneumoniae* is a bacterium that can cause serious and life-threatening illness of the brain (meningitis), blood (septicemia), or lungs (pneumonia).

Some signs of pneumonia are:

- fever and chills
- fast difficult breathing
- chest pain that worsens when breathing in
- cough
- tiredness, listlessness, loss of appetite

## How is Pneumonia spread?

**Pneumonia is spread from person to person by coughing, sneezing or having close face-to-face contact.** It can also be spread through saliva. This can occur through activities such as kissing or sharing food, drinks, cigarettes, lipsticks, water bottles, mouth guards used for sports, or mouthpieces of musical instruments.



### **BACTERIAL PNEUMONIA is a vaccine-preventable disease**

In BC, a vaccine against some types of bacterial pneumonia is offered as part of routine childhood immunizations and also provided free to people who are at high risk of illness. Speak to your health care provider about your eligibility and needs for the vaccine. Other types of pneumonia cannot be prevented.



## What to Do at Home

- **Call your doctor** if you think your child has pneumonia.
- Your doctor may prescribe antibiotics to treat pneumonia caused by bacteria. Use all the medicine the doctor prescribes, even if your child begins to feel better.
- To prevent the spread of the germs that cause pneumonia, wash your child's hands and your hands, after wiping their nose and before preparing or eating food.
- Teach children to cover their mouths with a tissue or a sleeve (not a hand), when they sneeze or cough and to wash their hands after each use. Throw used tissues into the garbage.
- Sanitize surfaces often that are touched by hands, such as toys, tables, doorknobs.
- Ensure that children ages 6 – 59 months of age receive their influenza shot, to prevent influenza and the pneumonia that can happen with influenza.
- Ensure that infants receive pneumococcal vaccine as part of their routine immunizations to prevent pneumonias caused by some bacteria.
- **Do not give over-the-counter cough and cold medicines to a child under 6 years of age, unless your doctor tells you to.**



**Children with pneumonia may go to the child care centre or school when they feel well enough to take part in activities.**

Acetaminophen (Tylenol™, Tempra™) or ibuprofen (Advil™, Motrin™) may help reduce a fever and provide some comfort. Always follow the directions on the package about how much and how often to take acetaminophen or ibuprofen.

**Never give products containing ASA (acetylsalicylic acid, such as Aspirin™) to anyone under the age of 20 years.** Use of ASA products by children can lead to Reye's syndrome, a serious condition affecting the brain and liver.