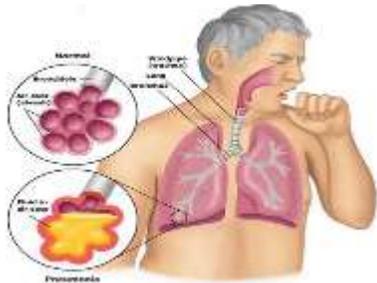


USEFUL LINKS

- [WHO Factsheets on Pneumonia](#)

Transmission

Pneumonia can be spread in a number of ways. The viruses and bacteria that are commonly found in a child's nose or throat, can infect the lungs if they are inhaled. They may also spread via air-borne droplets from a cough or sneeze. In addition, pneumonia may spread through blood, especially during and shortly after birth. Pre-existing illnesses, such as symptomatic HIV infections and measles, also increase a child's risk of contracting pneumonia.



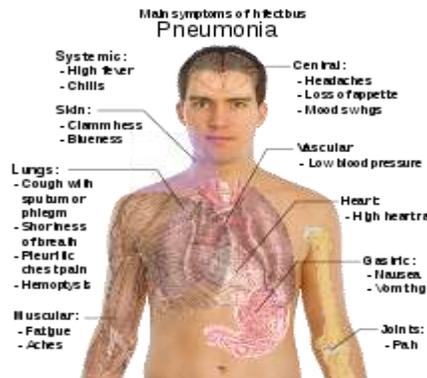
Treatment

Pneumonia can be treated with antibiotics. These are usually prescribed at a health centre or hospital, but the vast majority of cases of childhood pneumonia can be administered effectively within the home. Hospitalization is recommended in infants aged two months and younger, and also in very severe cases.

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PNEUMONIA



Pneumonia is an inflammatory condition of the lung that arises due to the inflammation of the microscopic air sacs in the lungs (the alveoli) or when the lungs fill with fluid (called *consolidation* and *exudation*). There are many causes, of which infection is the most common.

Pneumonia is the single largest cause of death in children worldwide. Every year, it kills an estimated 1.6 million children under the age of five years, accounting for 18% of all deaths of children under five years old worldwide. It affects children and families everywhere, but is most prevalent in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Pneumonia is caused by a number of infectious agents, including viruses, bacteria and fungi.

Symptoms

The symptoms of viral and bacterial pneumonia are similar. However, the symptoms of viral pneumonia may be more numerous than the symptoms of bacterial pneumonia. Typical symptoms include:

- rapid or difficult breathing
- cough
- fever
- chills
- loss of appetite
- wheezing (more common in viral infections).

In severe cases, children may experience lower chest wall indrawing, where their chests move in or retract during inhalation (in a healthy person, the chest expands during inhalation). Infants may be unable to feed or drink and may also experience unconsciousness, hypothermia and convulsions.

Prevention

Preventing pneumonia in children is an essential component of a strategy to reduce child mortality. Immunization against pneumococcus, measles and whooping cough (pertussis) is the most effective way to prevent pneumonia.

Adequate nutrition, starting from exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life is key to improving children's natural defences. In addition to being effective in preventing pneumonia, it also helps to reduce the length of the illness if a child does become ill.

Addressing environmental factors such as indoor air and encouraging good hygiene in crowded homes also reduces the number of children who fall ill with pneumonia.

In children infected with HIV, a daily dose of the antibiotic cotrimoxazole is given to decrease the risk of contracting pneumonia.

We welcome any comments, material or queries on this eNewsletter. Please contact us:

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