

# [head] At Home After Pneumonia

## [deck] Preventing complications when recovering from pneumonia

Pneumonia is a serious lung infection that can weaken your body and lead to complications. For some people, symptoms can linger for a month or more.

### [sub] Recovery

While you are recovering from pneumonia, you may experience:

- **A cough.** It is common for a cough to last up to 14 days.
- **Fatigue.** It may take 2 weeks for your energy levels to return to normal.
- **Poor appetite.** It can take a week for eating to come easily.

### [sub] Managing Symptoms

You should avoid taking cough suppressants and cold medicines unless cleared by your doctor. You must cough to get mucus out of your lungs. Try these tips to help ease your symptoms:

- Breathe in warm mist from a humidifier to soothe your cough and break up mucus
- Place a warm, moist cloth near your nose and mouth to work like a humidifier
- Get plenty of rest and good nutrition to support healing
- Drink plenty of fluids, including warm beverages, to keep your mucus loose
- Cough and take deep breaths 2 to 3 times per hour to open your lungs

### [sub] Antibiotics

You may still be taking antibiotics after you go home from the hospital. It is crucial to complete the full course. If you stop taking your antibiotic, you could reinfect yourself or become infected with drug-resistant bacteria.

Let your doctor know if your symptoms have not resolved when you finish your antibiotics.

### [sub] Keep Your Follow-up

You should have a follow-up appointment with your doctor about one week after leaving the hospital to make sure your pneumonia is gone. This is an excellent time to bring up concerns and take care of complications before they become serious.

## [sub] **Complications**

Some people experience complications of pneumonia, including:

- Pleural effusion – fluid accumulation between your lungs and chest wall
- Abscess – a pocket of pus in the area of your lungs that was infected
- Blood infection – bacteria from your lung infection spreads into your bloodstream
- Intestinal infection – bacteria called clostridium difficile can grow in your intestines after antibiotics and cause severe diarrhea

Let your doctor know right away if you have unusual or worse symptoms or diarrhea.

## [sub] **Warning Signs:**

Call 911 or seek emergency care if you experience:

- Fever
- Chills
- Chest pain
- Difficulty breathing
- Faster breaths
- Trouble getting a deep breath
- Confusion
- Blue color around your lips

## [callout 1] **Take Extra Care if You Have Other Medical Conditions**

Pneumonia can weaken your body and make you more likely to have a complication of another medical condition, such as heart failure or COPD. Monitor yourself and consult your doctor right away if you have any concerns. Acting early can help you take care of a problem before it becomes an emergency.

## [callout 2] **Smoking**

Do not smoke when you are recovering from pneumonia. Smoking irritates your lungs and can make your infection worse. Stay away from secondhand smoke and wood smoke too.

## [callout 3] **Oxygen**

Your doctor may send you home with oxygen therapy. Follow these tips for safe oxygen use at home:

- Do not change the settings on your oxygen without asking your doctor
- Never smoke or use an open flame near an oxygen tank
- Always keep a backup tank on hand
- Keep the contact information of your oxygen supplier with you

#### Sources

[Pneumonia Readmissions: Risk Factors and Implications](#). The Ochsner Journal.

[Patient education: Pneumonia in adults \(Beyond the Basics\)](#). Up to Date.

[Pneumonia Treatment and Recovery](#). American Lung Association.