

COLD, FLU OR PNEUMONIA?

Were you among the million people who went to the doctor with pneumonia last year? Perhaps you know one of the 50,000 people who died of its complications. Did you know you can get a series of two vaccines to prevent some forms of pneumonia?

Knowing the differences can help you know how serious your illness is. Here is a guide to help you decide.

	Cold	Flu	Pneumonia
Fever	Rare	Around 101	As high as 105
Headache	Rare	Yes	No
Muscle aches	Slight	Often severe	No
Sore throat/sniffles	Yes	Sometimes	No
Cough	Common	Dry, harsh	Moist, sputum may be green or rust color

Who do providers recommend get the vaccine? Those < 2 yrs., > 65 yrs., with certain illnesses (sickle cell disease, HIV infection, diabetes, immune compromising conditions, chronic heart, lung, kidney, or liver disease), cochlear implants or cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) leaks, conditions that weaken the immune system, alcoholism, and smokers.

The flu shot is given once a year. The vaccine for pneumonia is given twice, one year apart. That's it. Two shots to help prevent pneumonia. As always, check with you health care provider for advice specific to you.

Germs are among us. Door handles, computer keyboards, phones, in fact anything you touch is covered with germs. Frequently wipe down these surfaces with a disinfectant cleaner. Remember to wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol is an option, though will not work if your hands are dirty or greasy. Wash your hands often, and keep your hands away from your face.

Remember the power of a healthy lifestyle to fight off sickness. Exercise regularly, get enough sleep, drink fluids, eat lots of fruits and vegetables, and keep your stress at a manageable level.

If you are sick, stay home. Don't be the one to spread germs. Pneumonia is a serious condition and can be life-threatening if left untreated and especially for those individuals at increased risk for pneumonia.

If you do become ill:

- ***Complete medications and therapies prescribed by your doctor. Don't stop taking antibiotics when you feel better. Take them until no pills remain.***
- ***If over-the-counter medicines have been recommended (aspirin, acetaminophen, ibuprofen, naproxen), take as directed on the label.***
- ***Drink plenty of fluids to help loosen phlegm.***
- ***NO smoking. Don't be around others who smoke/vape.***
- ***Use a humidifier, take a steamy shower or bath to make it easier for you to breathe.***
- ***Get lots of rest. Don't rush your recovery. It can take weeks to fully recover.***

If you start to feel worse, call your doctor right away. You typically can resume your normal activities if your symptoms are gone, mild or improving and you don't have new or worsening shortness of breath or tiredness, chest discomfort, mucus, fever or cough. If you are generally healthy, most people feel well enough to return to previous activities in about a week. However, it may take about a month to feel totally back to normal. Go to the emergency room or call 911 if you: Struggle to breathe or are short of breath while sitting still, have new or worsening chest pain, are confused or cannot think clearly.

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