

Pneumonia

For family, friends and caregivers of a patient with pneumonia in the Medical Surgical Intensive Care Unit (MSICU)

This brochure will give you more information about:

- The causes and symptoms of pneumonia
- How pneumonia is treated in the MSICU
- What you can do to help



What is pneumonia?

Pneumonia is an infection of one or both lungs that can be caused by bacteria, viruses or fungi.

- The lungs are made up of small sacs called alveoli that fill with air when a healthy person breathes.
- When a person has pneumonia, the alveoli fill with pus and fluid. This makes breathing difficult and makes it hard for oxygen to move from the lungs into the blood.

There are 4 types of pneumonia:

1. **Community-acquired pneumonia (CAP)** – pneumonia that happens to people in the community setting, such as at home
2. **Hospital-acquired pneumonia (HAP)** – pneumonia that happens to people in a nursing home, rehab facility or during a hospital stay
3. **Ventilator-acquired pneumonia (VAP)** – pneumonia that happens to people when they are on a ventilator (breathing machine) usually for more than 3 days
4. **Aspiration pneumonia** – breathing in liquids or chemicals, such as vomit

Who can get pneumonia?

Anyone can get pneumonia but people older than 65 years of age or who already have health problems are more likely to get pneumonia.



What are the signs and symptoms of pneumonia?

- Shortness of breath or trouble breathing
- Coughing
- Wheezing
- Discoloured phlegm (mucus coughed up from the lungs)
- Fast breathing
- Low oxygen levels in the blood
- High carbon dioxide levels in the blood
- Fast heart beat
- Low blood pressure
- Hard time keeping awake and alert

What can cause pneumonia?

- Viruses such as the common cold or flu
- Bacteria such as pneumococcus, staphylococcus, pseudomonas and haemophilus
- Breathing in liquids or chemicals
- Health conditions like asthma, COPD or Emphysema
- Suppression (weakening) of the immune system

How is pneumonia treated in the MSICU?

Tests will be done before treatment begins such as:

- Blood tests
- Sputum cultures
- Chest x-ray, CT scan or both
- Bronchoscopy (a procedure that lets a doctor look inside a lung with a camera)

Some medications that may be used to treat pneumonia:

- Antibiotics
- Diuretics that remove fluid from the body
- Sedatives and pain medication that will help keep your loved one comfortable and make being on a breathing machine (ventilator) easier

Some of the treatments that may also be used to treat pneumonia are:

- Fluid restriction and removal using medications, dialysis or both
- Steroids to reduce inflammation (swelling)
- Chest tubes to drain fluid
- Intravenous fluids to help blood pressure
- Mechanical ventilation or breathing machine
- Tracheostomy (an opening made on the front of the neck to get air directly to the lungs)

What can I do to help?

Substitute Decision Maker

It is important for one family member to act on behalf of their loved one as a Substitute Decision Maker (SDM). An SDM is usually the next of kin, unless the patient chooses someone else.

As an SDM, you are responsible for giving accurate and honest information about your loved one to the health care team. You also:

- Partner with the health care team to make sure you understand what is happening with your loved one
- Work together with the team to decide about the care and treatment of your loved one

Please look for the brochure “Substitute Decision Makers and Naming an Attorney for Personal Care” in the MSICU waiting room.

Comfort and support

Although sometimes patients in the MSICU are on sedating medication, they do still need emotional support from their friends or families. Talk to them like you would at home. Bring toiletries, familiar pictures, books and comforting items from home.

Visiting hours

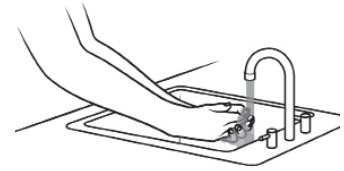
Please speak to the nurse taking care of your loved about the visiting policy. You can also speak to one of our Patient Care Coordinators or the in-charge nurse.

If you feel sick, please do not visit your loved one until you have recovered.

Important: Food and drinks are not allowed in patient rooms. We also do not allow the use of personal electronics such as cell phones in patient rooms or in the hallways. We have pay phones in the visitor waiting room and the hospital lobby.

Hand washing

You can help the health care team, your loved one and yourself by washing your hands often during your visits to MSICU.



Please follow all isolation instructions or talk to your nurse if you are not sure what to do when visiting an isolation room.

Who can I talk to if I have questions?

Do not be afraid to ask questions. Ask any member of the health care team to repeat or say information in a different way.

You can talk with any of the medical staff caring for your loved one about any concerns you may have.

More information about pneumonia

Medline Plus

- www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/pneumonia.html

My questions



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