

# Treating pneumonia and your aftercare for recovery

Specialist Pneumonia Intervention  
Nurse (SPIN) Team  
Information for Patients

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## Introduction

This leaflet explains what to expect when recovering from pneumonia and to use as a guide when you leave hospital. Details of who to contact for help if you need it are at the end of this leaflet. This leaflet does not include information about viral pneumonia caused by coronavirus (COVID-19).

On the day you leave hospital you may be asked to wait in the discharge lounge. This is an area where patients can wait for their medication and/ or wait for a relative or friend to collect them. If we can make you more comfortable while you wait please let staff know

## What do I need to take with me when I leave hospital?

- Your admission/ discharge summary.
- If you have been discharged from a ward the medication that you need will be ordered for you. The pharmacy can get busy and there may be a 2 to 4 hour wait. If you are being discharged from a clinic, an outpatient prescription will be given for you to collect your medication.
- A fitness to work certificate (if needed). The doctor can tell you how long you should expect to be off work.

## What is pneumonia?

Pneumonia is a type of chest infection in one or both lungs. It is usually caused by a bacterial infection but can be caused by various other reasons. It affects the tiny air sacs in your lungs (alveoli). These become inflamed and can cause difficulty in breathing.

**Health information and support is available at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)  
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit [www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk](http://www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk) for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals  
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact [InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)

Most people can be completely cured of pneumonia, but it can be life threatening. You should take it seriously even if you are young and fit.

The most common symptoms of pneumonia include:

- fever.
- a cough which may be dry, or produce thick green, yellow or brown mucus (phlegm).
- breathlessness or chest pain/ tightness.
- sweating and shivering.
- loss of appetite.
- feeling tired and a lack of energy (fatigue).
- headaches, dehydration and muscle aches.

You may not have all of these symptoms, or you may not have any symptoms at all.

## Your recovery

It is important to remember that we are all individuals. We will recover at different rates. It can take between 2 to 12 weeks to recover from pneumonia, sometimes longer. It will depend on whether you have other health conditions and how severe your pneumonia is.

### Getting out and about and returning to normal life:

You should start to feel better after 3 to 5 days of treatment with antibiotics. Tiredness and a mild cough can last for up to 4 weeks. If you do not feel that you are getting better, or if your breathing is getting worse, please contact the pneumonia nurse team to discuss if your symptoms. We can advise what actions to take this may include a review from your GP.

It is important to keep as active as you can whilst also allowing time to rest. Having a good night's sleep and small 'cat' naps throughout the day will help your body to heal.

### Things to look out for during your recovery:

- **Cough:** if you have a cough it should become looser as the antibiotics break down the infection, and it should change to a white/clear mucus. If this does not happen after 5 days of finishing your antibiotic course, it may be that you need an a longer course of treatment. We would advise going to your GP to check if you need more antibiotics.
- **Pain:** you may have chest pain due to the inflammation caused by pneumonia, and/ or coughing.
- **Eating and drinking:** patient's with pneumonia can have a loss of appetite so may feel like eating and drinking less. You should drink and eat often to help with your recovery and to keep your energy levels up. It may help to have smaller regular meals. Drink plenty of clear fluids (water) to keep hydrated. The use of 'build-up' supplements may be helpful as an added source of energy. They should not be used as a replacement for meals. If not prescribed whilst in hospital, these can be found in local supermarkets.

You must not drink alcohol whilst unwell and whilst on antibiotics.

## Treating pneumonia with antibiotics

We use antibiotics to treat pneumonia which is likely to be caused by a bacterial infection. You may need antibiotics given directly into a vein (intravenously) or in tablet form (orally), or both.

The type of antibiotic given will depend on several factors including your medical history, how severe your pneumonia is, and which type of bacteria you have.

**It is very important to finish the whole course of antibiotics given to you, even if you are feeling better. This will help to make sure that all the bacteria is completely gone.**

| Name of antibiotic | Intravenous (IV) or tablet?                  | Common side effects  | Rare side effects  |
|--------------------|--|--|--|
| Amoxicillin        | Usually tablet, but can also be given by IV. | Feeling or being sick<br>Diarrhoea<br>Thrush   | Swelling to the face or mouth or severe rash.<br><br>If these happen, stop taking immediately and seek medical advice.                           |
| Doxycycline        | Tablet                                       | Feeling or being sick<br>Diarrhoea<br>Avoid direct sunlight and use extra sun protection as you may burn easily. | Changes to your eyesight, swelling to the face or mouth or severe rash.<br><br>If these happen, stop taking immediately and seek medical advice. |
| Co-Amoxiclav       | Will depend on amount needed.                | Feeling or being sick<br>Diarrhoea<br>Thrush   | Swelling to the face or mouth or severe rash.<br><br>If these happen, stop taking immediately and seek medical advice.                           |
| Clarithromycin     | Will depend on how severe the pneumonia is.  | Acid reflux<br>Changes to your taste<br>Headaches<br>Trouble sleeping  | Abnormal dreams, depression and changes to the colour of your tongue.<br><br>If these happen, stop taking immediately and seek medical advice.   |
| Meropenem          | IV   | Redness and swelling at the point of injection.  | Confusion, dizziness, fainting, fast heartbeat, sweating.<br><br>If these happen, stop taking immediately and seek medical advice.               |

## After discharge from hospital

- Some patients with pneumonia only need a short stay in hospital (24 to 48 hours). During this time you may have been visited by a pneumonia specialist nurse. However, if you are discharged within 24 hours, the specialist nurse will try to contact you by phone instead to answer any queries you may have with your diagnosis. This can happen up to a week after you have left hospital.
- You may need a chest X-ray 6 weeks after discharge to make sure you have fully recovered. The results will be sent to you through the post. Depending on the results you may be referred to a consultant for a further follow-up or be seen by a specialist nurse in clinic, or discharged back into the care of your GP.

## Preventing pneumonia

- Viral infections such as flu and the common cold can increase the risk of developing pneumonia, so having good hand hygiene is important to reduce the spread of germs.
- There is a vaccine available (pneumococcal vaccine) for those who are at higher risk of serious illness from pneumonia. This includes people who:
  - are over the age of 65.
  - have multiple chest infections, or lung conditions such as emphysema or bronchiectasis (types of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)).
  - have long-term health conditions affecting the kidney, liver or heart.

The vaccine is available through your GP practice. It protects you from becoming seriously unwell from the most common bacteria which causes pneumonia. It does not guarantee that you will not ever be treated for a pneumonia.

- People who smoke have a higher risk of developing pneumonia and other chest infections. Try to stop smoking if you are a smoker, as it damages your lungs and increases the chance of infection. Not smoking will help your recovery. If you would like help with stopping, please ask and we can give you further information.

## Self help tips

There are several self help tips we have included below that we recommend to our patients. We would encourage you to try. These include but are not limited to:

- Heat therapy to help with pain. Putting a hot water bottle or a medicine such as Tiger Balm on the affected area can really help with the inflammatory pain linked with pneumonia
- If you do not already, we would recommend taking an over the counter pain relief as needed. If you take any regular medications please check with a pharmacist if you can take other pain relief with your medicine.
- To have a good cough we recommend sitting in a chair, leaning forward, and, if struggling

with pain, hugging a pillow to your chest whilst coughing. Avoid over the counter cough suppressant medication. We want to encourage your coughing to clear any mucus on your chest.

- Steam therapy can help loosen the mucus in your lungs. Take a warm bath or shower, or inhale over a warm bowl of water in your sink so you can breathe in the steam.
- Breathing exercises can be helpful to aid your recovery:
 

Take 5 to 10 deep breaths. Then cough forcefully 2 to 3 times. This should help push some mucus out of your lungs.

Or, take a slow deep breath to fill lungs about 3/4 full. Hold the breath for 2 to 3 seconds. Breathe out forcefully but slowly in a continuous breath to move mucus from the smaller to the larger airways
- Give your body the rest it needs to help fight this infection. As you are able, slowly start to include your usual activities, but do not overdo it.

## Contact details

If you have any worries about your follow-up care, please do not hesitate to contact the Pneumonia Team on 0116 258 3312. We are available 7 days a week 8am to 6pm.

If you have been referred for a follow-up chest X-ray and have any questions about your appointment, please contact our Appointment Co-ordinator on 0116 258 3177 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 3pm).

### Useful contact details out of service hours:

- NHS helpline 111 (for non-emergency medical advice)

### Outpatient prescription collection:

TrustMed Pharmacy will

- dispense all prescriptions issued in clinics,
- sell medicines,
- offer advice on medication.

They are available at all 3 Leicester Hospitals.

Glenfield Hospital: Monday to Friday 9am to 6pm. For enquires call 0116 235 5474

Leicester General Hospital: Monday to Friday 9am to 6pm. For enquires call 0116 273 8996

Leicester Royal Infirmary: Monday to Friday 8.30am to 8pm. Saturday and Sunday 9am to 7pm.

For enquires call 0116 254 1446

For other prescriptions please talk to staff about your local pharmacy options.

## Further information

1. NHS website: [www.nhs.uk/conditions/pneumonia/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pneumonia/)
2. Asthma + Lung UK:  
[www.asthmaandlung.org.uk/conditions/pneumonia](http://www.asthmaandlung.org.uk/conditions/pneumonia)
3. Live Well Leicester - Stop Smoking Service:  
[livewell.leicester.gov.uk/services/stopping-smoking](http://livewell.leicester.gov.uk/services/stopping-smoking)
4. Recovery and treatment is different for COVID-19. If you have any questions or concerns about COVID-19 please visit:  
[www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/)

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## Giving feedback

We would kindly ask if you have any feedback to help improve the service we offer to patients to please complete the survey below or scan the QR code.

[https://share-eu1.hsforms.com/14WpLtkaoQIWPAkYUV3\\_5pQ2dl3o1](https://share-eu1.hsforms.com/14WpLtkaoQIWPAkYUV3_5pQ2dl3o1)



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اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔  
على هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل  
જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો

જે તુમીં ઇચ જાદવારી કિમે હેર ઢામ્મા દિચ ચાહુંદે હે, ડાં વિચખા વચ્ચે હેઠાં દિંડે ગદે નંબર 'હે ટેલીફોન વચે।

Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email [equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)