Pneumonia

For Staff

What are the symptoms of pneumonia?

Most residents with pneumonia will have a combination of cough, fever, shortness of breath, rapid breathing, and/or low oxygen. Residents with pneumonia generally feel ill; they may not feel like eating much or getting up as usual.

How is pneumonia diagnosed?

The diagnosis of pneumonia is generally made by clinical signs and symptoms including new onset productive cough, shortness of breath, fever, low oxygen levels, and focal crackles in the lung. A chest X-ray is often done to confirm the diagnosis. Other tests such as a nasopharyngeal swab and blood work (CBC, BMP) may be done as well.

What causes pneumonia?

Pneumonia may be caused by bacteria, particularly Streptococcus pneumoniae, or viruses such as influenza. Pneumonia can occasionally be caused by a fungus.

What is the usual treatment for pneumonia?

Pneumonia is generally treated with antibiotics for 5-7 days. The exact choice of antibiotics will depend on a number of factors including the resident’s allergies, severity of pneumonia, and others. If the resident’s pneumonia is caused by influenza, treatment may include oseltamivir and typically does not include antibiotics. Some residents may also benefit from nebulizer treatments such as albuterol and oxygen therapy.

Who is at risk of getting pneumonia?

Residents who have difficulty swallowing, feeding tubes, underlying lung disease, or are immunocompromised (weak immune system) are at risk. Smoking also increases the risk for developing pneumonia.

What should I be monitoring in a patient with pneumonia?

Keep a close eye on the resident’s breathing effort and oxygen levels. It is also important to be sure the patient is staying hydrated; they may need more help with meals or reminders to drink fluids during their illness. If they do not seem to be getting better or are getting worse, be sure to let their provider know.
What can I do to help prevent my residents from getting pneumonia?

Encourage them to stay up to date with their vaccinations include pneumonia and influenza vaccines. Also encourage safe eating habits including sitting upright when eating and any other specific recommendations noted from their provider or speech therapist. If they smoke, encourage them to stop smoking. To prevent the spread of pneumonia, be sure to practice good hand hygiene. It is also important for anyone with cough to cover their mouths during a cough or sneeze.