

Christchurch Hospital

What is Pneumonia?

Pneumonia is an infection of the small air sacs of the lungs. Usually only part of the lungs are involved. It is caused by either bacterial or viral infection. Viral pneumonia is more common in children. Pneumonia occurs more often during the winter months and may sometimes occur after a cold. Pneumonia affects all age groups. Recovery usually takes seven to ten days.

Signs and Symptoms

Symptoms vary depending on the child's age and the cause of the infection.

Symptoms in infants and young children can include:

- Fever
- Fast breathing (tachypnoea)
- Difficulty with breathing
- Difficulty with feeding
- Poor appetite
- Cough

Older children may also complain of:

- Stomach pains
- Headache
- Chest pain
- Feeling generally unwell

Grunting noises with breathing and flaring nostrils are common symptoms of pneumonia.

Treatment of Pneumonia

Antibiotics will be prescribed if the pneumonia may be caused by a bacterial infection. In most cases this can be treated at home with oral antibiotics.

If your child is very unwell and not eating and drinking they may require antibiotics to be given through a drip. This means a stay in hospital of usually 24-48 hours.

Discharge Advice

- If your child has been prescribed antibiotics, it is important that they are given for the complete course which will be indicated on the bottle.
- Do not let anyone smoke near your child. Smokefree children recover faster and keep healthier.
- Pain and discomfort can be helped with Paracetamol (see below).
- Encourage a healthy diet and plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration.
- Encourage plenty of rest and keep your child at home until they are well. Recovery usually takes seven to ten days. The cough may **persist** for two or more weeks.

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How much Paracetamol should I give?

The usual dose is 15mg of paracetamol per kg of body weight, no more often than 4 hourly, no more than 4 doses per day. Do not give regularly for more than two days. See your GP if they are still feverish. For example, if your child weighs 10kg: 15mg x 10kg = 150mg 4 hourly.

Today's Date: _____

The usual dose for your child is: _____ Based on today's weight of _____ kg

Paracetamol liquid comes in two strengths: 120mg/5mls and 250mg/5mls. Please check that you are giving the right dose for the strength you have. Make sure that medicines always have a child proof cap and that bottles are stored out of reach.

Seek Medical help if your child:

- Looks unwell
- Breathing gets worse
- Becomes floppy or lethargic

Information on your child's admission will be sent to your GP.

Have you changed your GP? If so, do we have your current GP recorded correctly?

If you do not have a regular GP, please talk to your nurse who can give you a list of GPs in your area.

If you have been discharged from the Children's Acute Assessment Unit, one of the nurses will phone you the next day to check on your child's progress and answer any questions you may have.

If you are concerned over the next 24 hours , please contact us on 364 0428

Continue to contact your GP for ongoing care of your child

Children's health information website: www.kidshealth.org.nz

Christchurch Hospital website: www.cdhb.govt.nz

