

Pneumonia that occurs in a continuing care centre is called Nursing Home Acquired Pneumonia. It is a very serious health problem among the elderly. Pneumonia can come on suddenly and get worse quickly. Early treatment is important.



Nursing Home Acquired Pneumonia

Pneumonia is an infection of the lungs and is most often caused by bacteria. When a person has pneumonia, fluid collects in the lungs and makes it hard for oxygen to get into the body.

Rapid breathing is an important sign that a resident has pneumonia. Other symptoms are green or yellow discharge, fever, coughing, shortness of breath and chest pain. An examination by a nurse or doctor will show whether the infection is pneumonia. Sometimes a chest x-ray will be done to help diagnose.

Pneumonia is a very serious health problem, especially among the elderly. Pneumonia can come on suddenly and get worse quickly.

Early treatment is important; report any symptoms of pneumonia to nursing staff right away. Some residents may have difficulty telling someone how they are feeling therefore family members and health care aides are often the first to notice symptoms.

Pneumonia is most often treated with antibiotics along with rest and drinking plenty of fluids. Extra fluids may be given under the skin if a resident cannot drink enough fluids by mouth. Sometimes oxygen is needed.

Antibiotics should not be given unless the resident has been diagnosed with pneumonia. Antibiotics are not needed for most sore throats, coughs, colds, influenza and other respiratory infections caused by viruses. Taking antibiotics when they are not needed can lead to other

serious medical problems and antibiotic resistance.

Most of the time hospitalization is not needed, however, some residents may be hospitalized if they are having trouble breathing, have other medical problems or if their symptoms are worsening.

Pneumococcal vaccine for residents will help prevent infection from some of the bacteria that can cause pneumonia. Annual influenza vaccination is also recommended for everyone since pneumonia often occurs after influenza.

Aspiration Pneumonia

Sometimes pneumonia is due to inhaling food or other objects into the lungs. This can lead to an infection and is known as aspiration pneumonia. Aspiration pneumonia is a problem for the elderly because they may have trouble chewing or swallowing food.

A clinical examination and medical history will show whether pneumonia is due to inhaling something into the lungs. Sometimes a

chest x-ray will be done. Aspiration pneumonia is most often treated with antibiotics.

Prevention is the best way to avoid aspiration pneumonia. Residents who have trouble chewing or swallowing should eat soft foods, eat sitting up and keep their mouth moist. Remind the resident to clear food from their mouth with their tongue. Ensure any dental problems are treated.