



Chest Infection

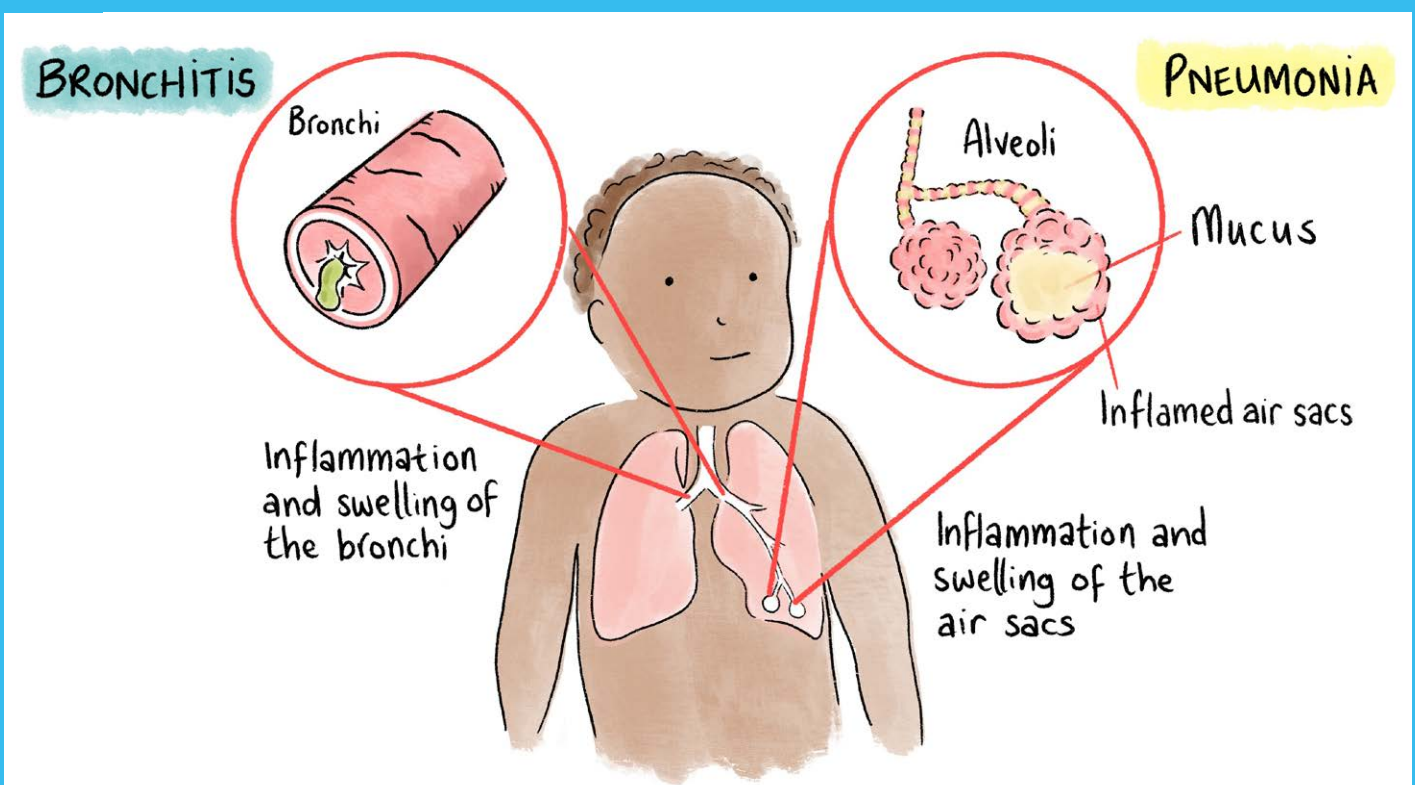
Information for parents and carers

Key facts

A chest infection is an infection in one or both lungs.
The main types of chest infection are bronchitis and pneumonia.

- Most bronchitis cases are caused by viruses
- Most pneumonia cases are due to bacteria
- More common in children younger than 2 years
- It is called community acquired when the infection starts in the community

The information in this leaflet is going to focus on pneumonia



Symptoms of Pneumonia



High temperature



Coughing



Difficulty breathing



Tummy pain



Chest pain
Especially when coughing



Reduced appetite



Feeling tired



Vomiting



Caring for your child at home

If your child does not have any red or amber symptoms in the traffic light advice then you can care for your child at home.

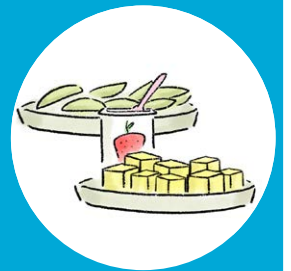
If your child is already taking medicines or inhalers, you should carry on using these.

If your child has pneumonia, you can help them by doing the following:

- 1** Give your child smaller amounts of fluid, more often



- 2** Many children refuse to eat. This is not a problem, as long as they stay hydrated. Offer small snacks



- 3** Ensure they get plenty of rest



- 4** A supported sitting position may help to expand the lungs and improve breathing



5 Get them to sleep propped up on pillows if older than one year, which may be more comfortable.

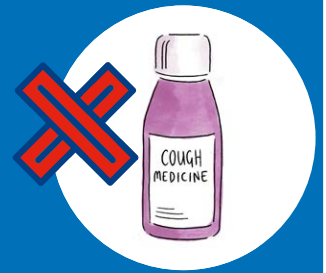


If your child is in pain or distressed and over 3 months old, you can give them liquid paracetamol or ibuprofen

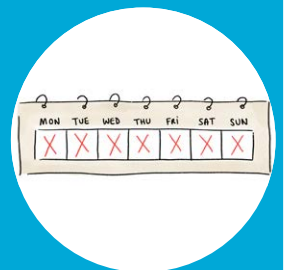
6 At home, we do not recommend giving paracetamol and ibuprofen at the same time. If your child has not improved after two to three hours you may want to give them the other medicine. Never exceed the dose on the packaging.



7 Do not give cough medicines



8 It is very important to continue the whole course of antibiotics even if your child seems better



Make sure your child is never exposed to tobacco smoke. Passive smoking can seriously damage children's health. It can make breathing problems worse.

Remember, smoke remains on your clothes when you smoke anywhere, including outside.





How is pneumonia diagnosed?

You will be asked questions about your child's symptoms and the clinicians will listen to your child's chest using a stethoscope. Usually no tests are needed but your child's clinician will decide if they need to have a chest x-ray or blood test.



Treatments

Pneumonia is treated with antibiotics, children usually improve within 48 hours of starting antibiotics. Most of the time oral antibiotics will be enough but if your child is very unwell, has complications or cannot tolerate oral medications, they might require antibiotics given through a vein.

Sometimes oxygen therapy is required to help them breathe more easily. Children who are unable to maintain their fluid intake due to breathlessness, tiredness or vomiting may need fluid therapy.

What to keep in your medicine cabinet

Keep the following items in your medicine cabinet ready for when you need them;

- Liquid Paracetamol (e.g. Calpol)
- Liquid Ibuprofen – please note that if your child has been diagnosed with Asthma, Ibuprofen is not recommended unless discussed with your doctor first.

Never exceed the maximum dose for paracetamol and ibuprofen in any 24-hour period. Keep a diary of when you give each dose so that you do not give your child too much.

Please check the use-by dates and keep out of reach of children. These medicines are all available over the counter from a pharmacist. The pharmacy or supermarket own brands are cheaper and work just as well, if you are unsure, ask your pharmacist.



Children can change quickly and if at any time your child displays any of the 'Red' features in the box below you should seek EMERGENCY HELP.



RED

If your child

- Has blue lips
- Becomes pale, mottled and feels abnormally cold to touch
- Is struggling to breathe
- Has a fit/seizure
- Becomes extremely agitated – crying inconsolably despite distraction, confused or very lethargic (difficult to wake)
- Develops a rash that does not disappear with pressure (the 'glass test')
- Is under 3 months of age with a temperature of 38°C or above (unless the fever is 48 hours following a vaccination and no other red or amber features)

**YOU NEED EMERGENCY HELP
CALL 999**

**You need to be seen at the
hospital Emergency Department**



AMBER

If your child has any one of these features

- Appears to be getting worse or if you are worried
- Restless or irritable
- Increased difficulty breathing
- Temperature of >39°C despite paracetamol and/or ibuprofen
- Continues to have a fever of 38°C or above for 5 days or more
- Reduced fluid intake by half usual amount
- Passed urine less than twice in 12 hours
- Has extreme shivering or complains or muscle pains
- Vomiting

SEEK MEDICAL ADVICE TODAY

Please call your GP surgery, or, if it is closed call NHS 111

Your GP may want to speak to you on the phone first to give you medical advice. They will arrange to see your child if it is appropriate.



GREEN

If none of the features in the red or amber boxes above are present

- Has normal-coloured skin, lips and tongue
- Responds to you normally
- Is basically content and will smile
- Stays awake or awakens quickly and easily when you wake them
- Has a strong normal cry, or is not crying
- Has moist lips and tongue

See 'Important things to consider' box

SELF-CARE

Using the advice on this leaflet you can care for your child at home.

The most important advice is to keep your child well hydrated.

If you feel you need more advice, please contact your local pharmacy, Health Visitor or GP surgery.

You can also call NHS 111 for advice.

Important factors to consider

There are important factors to consider that may affect your child's ability to cope with infection. These are if your child:

- was a premature baby
- is less than 12 weeks old
- has a lung problem
- has a heart problem
- has a problem with their immune system
- or any other pre-existing medical condition that may affect their ability to cope with illness

We recommend that in these circumstances you seek medical advice

How long does it take to recover?

The cough may go on for a few weeks or more; this is usually longer than most common coughs and colds.

Your child can go back to nursery or school as soon as they are well enough (feeding normally and with no breathing difficulties).

You should go back to see your GP if

- Your child's breathing becomes more difficult
- They become more sleepy
- They begin vomiting and are unable to drink much
- A persistent fever, the temperature should start to settle within around 48 hours after treatment starts
- You are worried about your child

Key points to remember

- If your child has pneumonia they will need rest and drink small amounts of fluid often to prevent dehydration
- It is very important for your child to complete the full course of antibiotics if they have been prescribed
- Cough medicines do not help children with pneumonia
- The cough can persist for up to 6-8 weeks after the infection has cleared.