Pneumonia Can Be Prevented - Vaccines Can Help

Pneumonia is an infection of the lungs that is usually caused by bacteria or viruses. Globally, pneumonia causes more deaths than any other infectious disease. It can often be prevented and can usually be treated.

Every 20 seconds, somewhere in the world, a child dies from pneumonia. Many of these deaths are preventable through vaccination and appropriate treatment.

What Is Pneumonia?

Pneumonia is an infection of the lungs that can cause mild to severe illness in people of all ages. Signs of pneumonia can include coughing, fever, fatigue, nausea, vomiting, rapid breathing or shortness of breath, chills, or chest pain. Certain people are more likely to become ill with pneumonia. This includes adults 65 years of age or older and children younger than 5 years of age. People up through 64 years of age who have underlying medical conditions (like diabetes or HIV/AIDS) and people 19 through 64 who smoke cigarettes or have asthma are also at increased risk for getting pneumonia.

Causes of Pneumonia

Encourage friends and loved ones with certain health conditions, like diabetes and asthma, to get vaccinated against the flu and bacterial pneumonia.

When bacteria, viruses or, rarely, fungi living in your nose, mouth, sinuses, or the environment spread to your lungs, you can develop pneumonia or other infections. You can catch the bacteria or viruses from people who are infected with them, whether they are sick or not.

Types of Pneumonia

You may have heard of community-acquired pneumonia (CAP). When someone develops pneumonia in the community (not in a hospital), it's called CAP.
Encourage someone with asthma or diabetes to get vaccinated against the flu and bacterial pneumonia.

Pneumonia developed during or following a stay in a healthcare facility (like hospitals, long-term care facilities, and dialysis centers) is called healthcare-associated pneumonia (HCAP), which includes hospital-acquired pneumonia (HAP) and ventilator-associated pneumonia (VAP).

In the United States, the most common bacterial cause of pneumonia is \textit{Streptococcus pneumoniae} (pneumococcus) and the most common viral causes are influenza, parainfluenza, and respiratory syncytial viruses. In children younger than 1 year of age, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is the most common cause of pneumonia. Other common bacterial and viral causes of pneumonia in the United States include \textit{Staphylococcus aureus} and adenovirus. \textit{Pneumocystis jirovecii}, a fungus formerly known as \textit{Pneumocystis carinii}, is a common cause of pneumonia in patients with AIDS.

\section*{Reduce Your Risk}

Pneumonia can be prevented with vaccines. Following good hygiene practices can also help prevent respiratory infections. This includes washing your hands regularly, cleaning hard surfaces that are touched often (like doorknobs and countertops), and coughing or sneezing into a tissue or into your elbow or sleeve. You can also reduce your risk of getting pneumonia by limiting exposure to cigarette smoke and treating and preventing conditions like diabetes and HIV/AIDS.

In the United States, there are several vaccines that prevent infection by bacteria or viruses that may cause pneumonia. These vaccines include:

\begin{itemize}
  \item Pneumococcal,
  \item \textit{Haemophilus influenzae} type b (Hib),
  \item Pertussis (whooping cough),
  \item Varicella (chickenpox),
  \item Measles, and
  \item Influenza (flu) vaccine.
\end{itemize}

Globally each year, pneumonia kills more than 1.5 million children younger than 5 years of age.

\section*{National and Global Impact}
In 2009, 1.1 million people in the United States were hospitalized with pneumonia and more than 50,000 people died from the disease.

Globally, pneumonia kills more than 1.5 million children younger than 5 years of age each year. This is greater than the number of deaths from any other infectious disease, such as AIDS, malaria or tuberculosis. Access to vaccines and treatment (like antibiotics and antivirals) can help prevent many pneumonia-related deaths. Pneumonia experts are also working to prevent pneumonia in developing countries by reducing indoor air pollution and encouraging good hygiene practices.