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All About Pneumonia in Children



Judy Koutsky
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What are the signs of pneumonia in children and how is it treated? Here's what the experts have to say.

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Your little one has a cough and fever, but is it as serious as pneumonia? Learning the signs and symptoms of pneumonia in children can help you learn when you can treat your kid at home

and when it's time to call the doctor, and knowing the facts about pneumonia can protect your

and when it's time to call the doctor, and knowing the facts about pneumonia can put your mind at ease. Here's what to look for when your child is sick, and when it's time to get more help.

Is It Pneumonia?

The beginning stages of pneumonia in children often resemble a cold or the flu: cough, runny nose and congestion. "However, pneumonia is more likely to have a fever and symptoms of difficulty breathing," says [Dr. Amesh A. Adalja](#), an infectious disease physician and creator of the blog [Tracking Zebra](#).

"Pneumonia refers to an infection in the lungs," says pediatrician [Dr. Matthew Broom](#), the medical director of Danis Pediatric Center at SSM Cardinal Glennon Children's Medical Center. So kids who have it often have a hard time catching their breath, are breathing fast or may be wheezing, Dr. Broom notes. Sometimes children may look more fatigued or pale. Not sure if your child has it? Your doctor may perform a chest X-ray to take a closer look at his lungs.

How Do You Treat It?

Pneumonia in children may be contagious depending on what the cause is. "Pneumonia caused by upper respiratory viruses are contagious, while those caused by bacteria are less so," says Dr. Adalja. He notes that "pneumonia in children is often viral, so it's treated with fluids. Bacterial pneumonia is treated with antibiotics." Confirm with your doctor which treatment your child will need, and if she will need to be quarantined from siblings to keep the illness from moving through your family.

There are some natural remedies that can ease the symptoms and comfort your little one.

"Honey is a great natural antiviral medicine to ease the cough, soothe the throat and decrease the length of time of the illness," says [Dr. Dina Kulik](#), a pediatrician and emergency medicine physician and owner of [KinderCare Pediatrics](#). The [American Academy of Pediatrics \(AAP\)](#)

does not recommend giving honey to babies under a year but notes honey is a good way to ease coughing in older kids.

What about over-the-counter pain relievers? Acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Motrin) for pain and fever is fine, says Dr. Broom. He notes, "Most viral pneumonias will resolve in several days, however children may have a lingering cough for one to two weeks afterwards." He also suggests plenty of water to make sure your child is not dehydrated. "Cough suppressants are not recommended as a treatment in children," Dr. Broom advises.

How Do You Prevent Pneumonia in Children?

Get your kids vaccinated against the flu every year and also make sure they receive the [Hib](#) (Haemophilus influenzae type B) and [PCV13](#) (pneumococcal conjugate) vaccine series, says Dr. Adalja. The PCV13 is usually completed by the time your baby is 12 to 15 months old, notes Dr. Broom. Additionally, little things can make a huge difference. "Wash your hands, and teach your children the same. Cover coughs and sneezes with your elbow or a tissue," says Dr. Kulik. And keep kids home if they're sick -- plenty of bed rest goes a long way.

And read about these [6 Ways to Stay Healthy When Caring for Sick Kids](#).

Judy Koutsky is the former Editorial Director of KIWI magazine, a green parenting publication. She was also Executive Editor of [Parenting.com](#), AOL Parent and [BabyTalk.com](#). Follow her on twitter [@JudyKoutsky](#).

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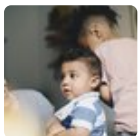
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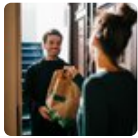
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