

# Diseases, Disorders and Injuries

## Pneumonia

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## What is pneumonia?

Pneumonia is an infection of one or both lungs. It is typically caused by certain bacteria, viruses or fungi. When germs are inhaled, they can settle in your lungs and overcome your body's natural defence mechanisms. Eventually, the lungs become infected and fill with mucus, making it harder for oxygen to reach the bloodstream.

Symptoms of pneumonia can be mild or severe and include a cough with green, yellow, or bloody mucus, a fever, shortness of breath, or low energy. Pneumonia can be life-threatening and is the leading cause of hospitalization and death in individuals with certain chronic diseases and in aging workers.

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## What occupations are at risk of developing pneumonia?

The table below lists examples of diseases that can cause pneumonia and occupations that may be at risk. This list is not exhaustive. It is recommended that employers and workers understand the hazards that may be in the workplace and whether there is a risk of developing pneumonia from occupational exposures by conducting a [risk assessment](#).

Germ	Occupation	Disease
Bacteria	Workers who maintain water cooling towers in air-conditioned systems	<a href="#">Legionnaire's Disease</a>
	Welders and other metalworkers	Pneumococcal Pneumonia
		Welder's Anthrax
	Poultry farmers and abattoir workers	<a href="#">Psittacosis</a>
	Bird and pigeon fanciers	
	Bird quarantine facilities employees	
	Veterinary clinic employees	
	Diagnostic laboratories employees	
	Racing pigeon keepers	
	Public health inspectors	
	Bird dealers	
	Farmers, ranchers, and farm workers in contact with cattle, sheep, and goats	<a href="#">Q Fever</a>
	Hunters and trappers	
	Meat packers, rendering plant workers, hide and wool handlers	
Virus	Poultry farm owners or workers	<a href="#">Avian influenza A(H5N1)</a>
	Poultry processing plant worker	
	Veterinary worker	
	Milking operator	
	Dairy plant process worker	
	Health care workers	<a href="#">Common Cold</a>
	<a href="#">Long-term care workers</a>	
	<a href="#">Emergency services workers</a>	
	<a href="#">Teachers and other staff in schools and childcare facilities</a>	<a href="#">COVID-19</a>
	<a href="#">Accommodation workers, such as in hotels, motels, hostels, and bed and breakfasts</a>	<a href="#">Influenza</a>
	<a href="#">Emergency shelter workers</a>	<a href="#">Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)</a>
	Commercial aircraft cabin crew and other transportation workers	
	Healthcare workers	<a href="#">Measles</a>
	Emergency service providers	
	Teachers and other workers in childcare facilities and schools	

Fungus	Workers who travel outside of Canada for work	Blastomycosis
	Airport workers	
	Hunters, farmers, forestry workers and other workers working in wooded areas	<a href="#">Histoplasmosis</a>
	Paper mill workers	
	Farmers and poultry keepers	
	Gardeners, landscapers, and horticulturists	
	Construction, tree clearing, restoration, and demolition workers	
	Workers who monitor bird populations	
	Workers who have contact with bats or bat caves	

## How can I develop pneumonia?

You can develop pneumonia:

- By breathing in viruses, bacteria, or fungi from the air into your lungs.
- During or after an upper respiratory infection, such as the common cold or influenza (flu).
- By complications from viral illnesses such as measles.
- By breathing in foreign material such as food, liquid, vomit, or mucus into your lungs.
- By breathing in metal fumes from welding processes.

## What are the symptoms of pneumonia?

Symptoms of pneumonia can range from mild to severe and may include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Mucus that is rusty or green
- Shortness of breath
- Fatigue
- Chest pain when you breathe or cough

- Chills
- Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea

In most cases, pneumonia is a mild illness and clears up in 2 to 3 weeks. However, in aging workers and in individuals with certain chronic health conditions, pneumonia may last 6 to 8 weeks or longer and may result in hospitalization.

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## Is pneumonia contagious?

Pneumonia itself is not contagious; however, viruses or bacteria that can cause pneumonia, such as Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) or measles, can spread from person to person through coughing, sneezing, or touching an infected surface. Fungi that can cause pneumonia are not contagious.

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## What precautions can workplaces take to reduce the risk of pneumonia?

Control measures should be based on the hazards in the workplace. In workplaces where workers may be exposed to germs or situations that can lead to pneumonia, a [risk assessment](#) must be conducted, and employers must use the most appropriate control measures following the [hierarchy of controls](#).

General precautions should be implemented anytime there is a risk of pneumonia in the workplace, including:

- Encouraging vaccination, if available and appropriate for workers (e.g. influenza, COVID-19, pneumococcal vaccines).
- Advising workers to stay home if they feel unwell, even if symptoms are mild.
- Providing hand washing stations or hand sanitizer dispensers to encourage [proper hand hygiene](#).
- Promoting respiratory etiquette, such as covering up sneezing and coughs with a tissue or elbow.
- Avoiding the sharing of equipment and tools and other materials such as utensils.
- Ensuring regular cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch surfaces.
- Providing appropriate personal protective equipment, such as a fit-tested N95 respirator, and training on the proper selection, care, inspection, use, and storage of personal protective equipment.
- Offering smoking cessation programs.

- Providing [healthy eating](#) and [physical activity](#) programs to encourage healthy lifestyles.
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## What precautions can workers take to reduce the risk of pneumonia?

Workers can reduce their risk of getting pneumonia by:

- Getting vaccinated, if available and appropriate.
  - Stay home if you feel unwell.
  - Practicing [proper hand hygiene](#) and respiratory etiquette.
  - Avoiding sharing of equipment and tools and other materials such as utensils.
  - Avoiding smoking.
  - Eating a healthy diet.
  - Exercising regularly.
  - Getting a good amount of sleep.
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## What should I do if I develop pneumonia?

If you have symptoms of pneumonia, stay home and seek medical care. If you believe a workplace exposure caused your pneumonia, inform your employer, as they may need to inform the government department responsible for [health and safety](#) or [compensation](#).

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