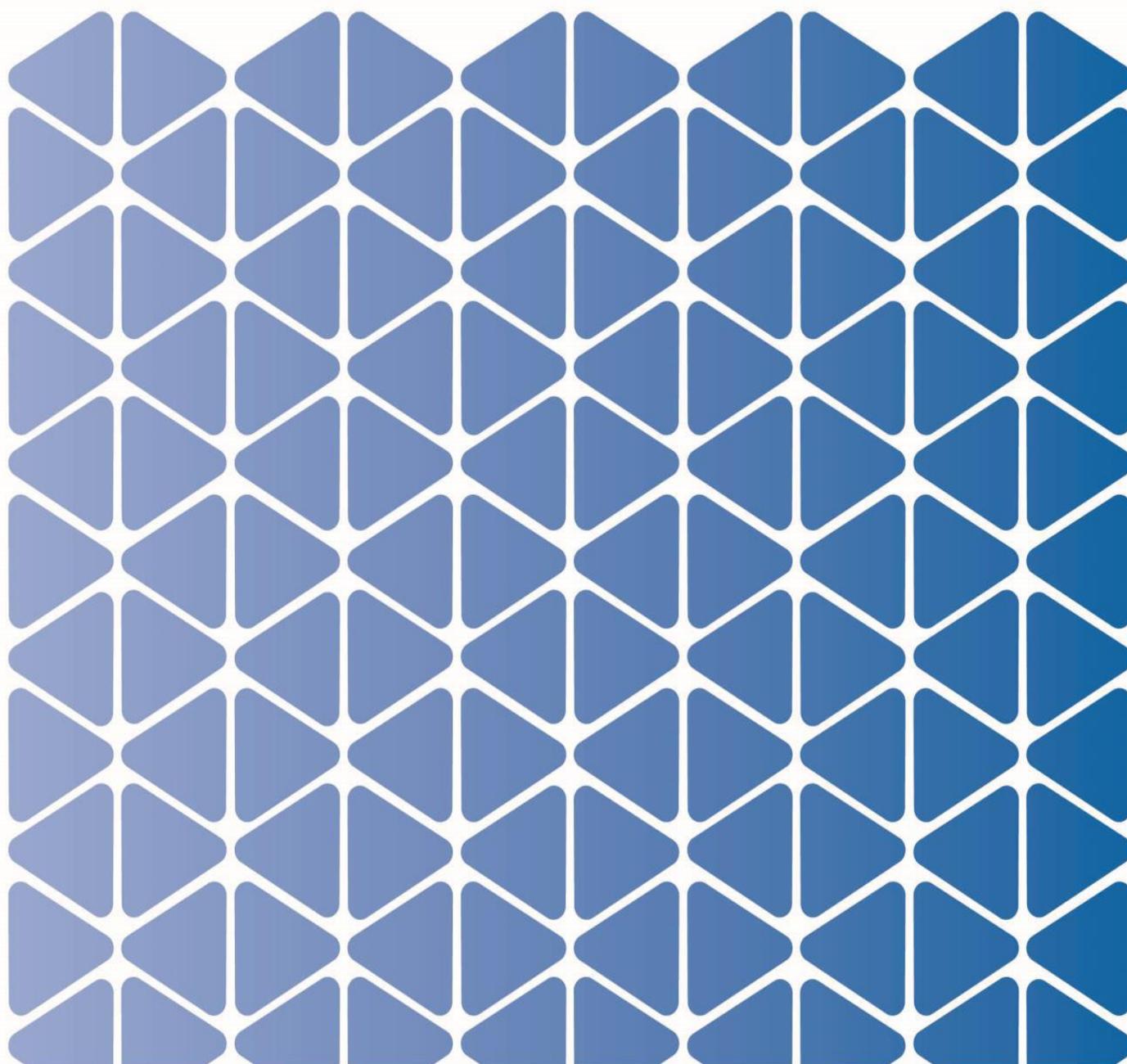


PATIENT INFORMATION

PNEUMONIA



Introduction

This leaflet provides information about pneumonia and the follow-up care you should expect after you have been discharged from the hospital. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

What is pneumonia?

Pneumonia is a type of chest infection that affects the lungs. It results in the inflammation of lung tissue, causing the tiny air sacs (alveoli) in your lungs to fill with fluid or pus. In the UK, between 5 and 11 adults per 1,000 get pneumonia each year.

What are the causes of pneumonia?

The most common causes of pneumonia are viruses, bacteria, or fungi. Pneumonia may also be caused by substances other than air entering your lungs, such as food or liquid (aspiration pneumonia).

Who is at risk of pneumonia?

Anyone can get pneumonia, at any age, but the following groups are at greater risk:

- The very young
- Adults over 65
- People with long-term lung, heart, brain, liver, kidney diseases, diabetes, or cancer
- Those with low immunity
- People on medications that suppress the immune system or chemotherapy
- Those who smoke or drink alcohol in excess

What are the symptoms?

The most common symptoms include cough, fever, difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle pain, and reduced appetite.

People may get a sharp pain in their chest when they are breathing. This may be caused by inflammation between the lung's lining and the ribs, and is called pleurisy.

In more serious cases people may breathe quickly, get confused (especially elderly people), have a low blood pressure, and a fast heart rate or palpitations. It is also possible to cough up blood, and to experience nausea and vomiting.

Some people may not have all the symptoms, while others may develop more severe symptoms.

What are the tests and examinations used to confirm the diagnosis?

The diagnosis is made based on your symptoms, chest examination, and chest x-ray - which may show shadowing in the lung. Blood, urine, or sputum samples may also be needed.

What is the treatment for pneumonia?

The treatment for pneumonia includes antibiotics, fluids, painkillers, and rest. In more severe cases, oxygen and blood thinners may be needed to prevent clot formation while you are in the hospital. Most people need a 5 to 7 day course of antibiotics, but they may not need to stay in the hospital for the entire course. In some cases, treatment takes longer.

What are the risks of not getting treatment?

It is important to complete the entire course of antibiotics to help prevent antibiotic resistance and to reduce the risk of complications such as:

- Pleurisy (inflammation of the lining of the lungs)
- Pleural effusion (fluid around the lungs)
- Lung abscess (a pus-filled cavity in the lung)
- Sepsis (infection that spreads to the blood and other organs)
- Respiratory failure (low oxygen or too much carbon dioxide in the blood)
- Death

How long does it take to recover from pneumonia?

Pneumonia can take several weeks to months to recover from. Recovery time depends on the severity of your pneumonia, your general health and age. In most cases, you should expect:

- 1 week: fever resolved
- 4 weeks: less mucus
- 6 weeks: less cough and easier breathing
- 3 months: symptoms mostly resolved, but you may still feel tired
- 6 months: symptoms fully resolved

What is important to help recovery?

It is important to stay mobile and not to stay in the hospital longer than needed. Light exercise, a healthy lifestyle and deep breathing exercises can be helpful. You can exercise your lungs by taking long slow deep breaths, or blowing through a straw into a glass of water. This is also good for clearing mucus from your lungs. More information can be found on www.acprc.org.uk

How to prevent pneumonia?

- Avoid smoking, as smokers have an increased risk of pneumonia.
- Avoid alcohol misuse, as it weakens your immune system.
- Practice good hygiene to reduce the spread of germs.
- Get vaccinated, particularly if you are in a risk group. Ask your GP about getting a pneumonia and annual flu jab.

Follow-up arrangements

If your chest x-ray shows pneumonia, a repeat x-ray may be scheduled for about 6 weeks after your hospital discharge. This is to ensure that the infection has resolved, and that there are no underlying problems in your lungs.

This is especially important if your symptoms are slow to get better, if you are over 50, or if you have a smoking history. This will be discussed with you before discharge, and you will receive a letter for the appointment if a follow-up X-ray is needed.

If you are coughing up blood, feeling short of breath, have chest pain, or if your fever or breathlessness is not improving during the week after discharge, please contact your GP urgently or call 111 for advice.

If you are struggling to breathe, have worsening chest pain, your skin looks pale, blue, or blotchy, you become drowsy, feel dizzy when standing, or suddenly feel confused call 999 immediately.

Where can I get additional information?

<https://www.blf.org.uk/support-for-you/pneumonia>
www.acprc.org.uk

Patient Experience

We know that being admitted to hospital can be a difficult and unsettling time for you and your loved ones. If you have any questions or concerns, please do speak with a member of staff on the ward or in the relevant department who will do their best to answer your questions and reassure you.

Feedback

Feedback is really important and useful to us – it can tell us where we are working well and where improvements can be made. There are lots of ways you can share your experience with us including completing our Friends and Family Test – cards are available and can be posted on all wards, departments and clinics at our hospitals. We value your comments and feedback and thank you for taking the time to share this with us.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If you have any concerns or questions about your care, we advise you to talk with the nurse in charge or the department manager in the first instance as they are best placed to answer any questions or resolve concerns quickly. If the relevant member of staff is unable to help resolve your concern, you can contact the PALS Team. We offer informal help, advice or support about any aspect of hospital services & experiences.

Our PALS team will liaise with the various departments in our hospitals on your behalf, if you feel unable to do so, to resolve your problems and where appropriate refer to outside help.

If you are still unhappy you can contact the Complaints Department, who can investigate your concerns. You can make a complaint orally, electronically or in writing and we can advise and guide you through the complaints procedure.

How to contact PALS:

Telephone Patient Services: 0300 123 1732 or via email at: wah-tr.PALS@nhs.net

Opening times:

The PALS telephone lines are open Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 4.00pm. Please be aware that you may need to leave a voicemail message, but we aim to return your call within one working day.

If you are unable to understand this leaflet, please communicate with a member of staff.