

Pneumonia (hospital-acquired): antimicrobial prescribing

Information for the public

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Pneumonia that develops in hospital: do I need antibiotics?

Pneumonia is a type of chest infection, which can be serious. Symptoms include a cough, bringing up phlegm (mucus), fever, difficulty breathing and chest pain. Sometimes people develop pneumonia while they are in hospital with another problem. This is called hospital-acquired pneumonia and is covered by this advice.

Using antibiotics when they are not needed means they may not work as well in the future. This is a serious health risk so NICE has written advice about when to offer antibiotics for some common conditions.

Because pneumonia is usually caused by bacteria and can be serious, you should be offered antibiotics.

You should be started on antibiotics as soon as possible, and definitely within 4 hours of being diagnosed.

You should have a sample of phlegm taken to check which bacteria are causing the infection. Your doctor may change your antibiotic when the results of these tests come back. People usually start to improve within a few days of starting antibiotics. Tell your doctor if you don't start to feel better or if you start to feel worse.

Where can I find out more?

Decisions about treatment and care are best when they are made together. Your health professionals should give you clear information, talk with you about your options and listen carefully to your views and concerns.

The NHS website has more information about:

- [pneumonia](#) and
- [antibiotics](#).

We have also written information on [why antibiotics should be used wisely](#).

We wrote this guideline with health professionals and members of the public. All the recommendations are based on the best research available.

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