

Health and Welfare Alert # 35-11-15  
*Preventing Pneumonia*

The purpose of this Health and Welfare Alert is to identify factors and conditions that may increase the risk, signs and symptoms that would indicate the need to contact a physician, and ways to help prevent pneumonia.

It is suggested that county boards and providers assess individuals that have a high risk and develop a plan to help mitigate the risk. All persons that support the individual should be aware of the signs and symptoms as well as the plan.

All DD Employees are required to be trained, annually, on identification and reporting of Major Unusual Incidents (MUIs) and Unusual Incidents (UIs) prior to direct contact. This training includes the review of any Health and Welfare Alerts released since the previous calendar year's training.

For questions or comments, please contact the MUI/Registry Unit at (614) 995-3810.

***Did you know?***

Pneumonia/Influenza-related hospitalizations accounted for 858 (17%) of all unscheduled hospitalization for Ohioans with developmental disabilities in 2014. Pneumonia is the leading cause of unscheduled hospitalizations. Deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza comprised 14% of all non-accidental deaths in 2014 (794).

Pneumonia is an infection of the lungs that can cause mild to severe illness in people of all ages. Common signs of pneumonia can include cough, fever, and trouble breathing.

***Factors/conditions that may increase risk of pneumonia:***

- *Age:* elderly (65 and older) and young (below age 5);
- *Smoking;*
- *Recent illness:* upper respiratory infection, influenza, viral illnesses;
- *Chronic Lung Conditions:* Asthma, emphysema, cystic fibrosis, chronic bronchitis;
- *Aspiration secondary to:* difficulty swallowing, gastro esophageal reflux disease, tube feeding, seizure disorder, cerebral palsy, suppressed or absent cough or sneeze reflex;

***Risk factors continued:***

- *Recent hospitalization;*
- *Sedentary lifestyle;*
- *Intravenous drug use;*
- *Immune system altered or weakened;*
- *Alcoholism Cirrhosis;*
- *Spleen removed or not functioning;*
- *Certain cancers and cancer treatments;*
- *HIV infection;*
- *Malnourished and*
- *Certain medications (e.g., steroids).*

***Symptoms of Pneumonia that indicate the need to see a Physician***

- Sudden onset of cough productive of discolored phlegm (bloody or containing pus colored yellow, green or brown/rust);
- Shaking chill(s) and/or high fever (usually >102.5 degrees F);
- Chest pain, especially sharp pain under the ribs;
- Pulse (heart) rate increase;
- Respiratory (breathing) rate increase;
- Breathlessness or atypical agitation; restlessness;
- Mental confusion;
- Abdominal pain;
- Blueness to skin, lips, nails (not enough oxygen getting to the tissues);

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## Symptoms of pneumonia continued

- Worsening cough: a dry cough that becomes wet, productive of phlegm;
- Elderly with minor cough for more than a few days;
- Symptoms of an upper respiratory infection that do not resolve or steadily worsen.

## Pneumonia can often be prevented!

In the United States, there are vaccines that help prevent infection by some of the bacteria and viruses that can cause pneumonia. These vaccines include:



- *Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib)*
- *Influenza (flu)*
- *Measles*
- *Pertussis (whooping cough)*
- *Pneumococcus*
- *Varicella (chickenpox)*

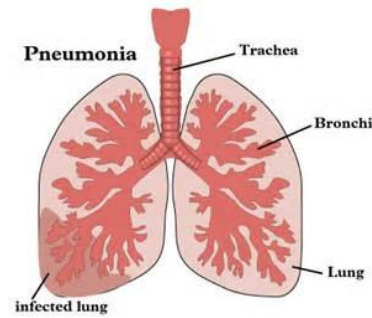
These vaccines are safe, but side effects can occur. Most side effects are mild or moderate, meaning they do not affect daily activities.

**Stop the spread of germs by covering your cough! Review this brochure with the individuals you support, families and employees.**

<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/dtopics/infectioncontrol/cover/gen/cybcgeneng.pdf>

## Steps to preventing Pneumonia

- *Talk to your Doctor about the Influenza and pneumococcal vaccine.* Individuals should discuss with their physician if the influenza and pneumococcal vaccine is appropriate for them.
- *Exercise:* active, passive exercise for those with limited mobility.
- *Positioning* -elevation of head and trunk, during and for at least 30 minutes after eating.
- *Obtain a swallow evaluation* if signs of possible swallowing problems.
- *Stop smoking and limit contact with cigarette smoke*
- *Eat a healthy diet*
- *Always use universal precautions* to avoid carrying bacteria and viruses from sick to healthy individuals.
- *Try to stay away from sick people.* If you are sick, stay away from others as much as possible to keep from getting them sick.
- You can also help prevent respiratory infections by:
  - Wash your hands regularly
  - Clean surfaces that are touched a lot
  - Cough or sneeze into a tissue or into your elbow or sleeve
  - Treat and prevent conditions like diabetes



## Other Info:

Center for Disease Control  
<http://www.cdc.gov/Features/Pneumonia/>

Immunization Information-CDC  
<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/flyers-brochures.htm#adult>

Ohio Department of Health  
<http://www.healthy.ohio.gov/diabetes/programs/immunization.aspx>

Ohio Department of Aging  
<http://aging.ohio.gov/new/s/boomerang/2010august/mylife.asp>

## World Health Organization

<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs331/en/>

Vaccines in your area  
<http://www.vaccines.gov/getting/where/>

## For Questions or Comments

For questions or comments regarding this alert, please contact the MUI/Registry Unit.