



Key Messages for World Pneumonia Day

Pneumonia: The Disease

What is pneumonia?

- Pneumonia is an infection of the lungs.
- It causes cough and fever and can make breathing difficult.
- Severe pneumonia can be deadly.

Who is most at risk?

- In most developing countries, children under 5 and especially under 2 years of age are at risk.¹
- The elderly are also at risk.
- Tobacco smoke and other indoor air pollution can also increase chances of being more susceptible to pneumonia.^{2,3}
- Some children and adults are at greater risk because they have other illnesses, such as AIDS.^{4,5} People with AIDS stand a much greater chance of dying from pneumonia.⁶
- Children who are poorly nourished can also have weakened immune systems, putting them at higher risk.⁷

What causes pneumonia?

- Many organisms can cause pneumonia.
- Globally, bacteria such as Hib and pneumococcus are estimated to cause more than 50% of pneumonia deaths in children under 5 years of age.⁸
- Viruses and fungi can also cause pneumonia infections.⁹

How is pneumonia diagnosed?

- In resource-poor settings, pneumonia can be diagnosed by the symptoms it causes, including cough, fever and difficulty or fast breathing.¹⁰
- Chest X-rays and laboratory tests can also diagnose pneumonia.
- These tools are often unavailable in developing countries, especially in remote rural communities, making it more difficult to diagnose and treat pneumonia.

How is pneumonia prevented and treated?

- Some pneumonia can often be prevented with vaccines against Hib and pneumococcus.¹¹
- Measles and pertussis (whooping cough) infections can result in pneumonia complications, so vaccinating against these childhood diseases can prevent some pneumonia cases.¹²
- Inexpensive antibiotics can effectively treat pneumonia at the community level.¹³

Now is the time to take action to deliver these life-saving solutions to all children and give children a chance for a better life.



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- ¹¹ Mahdi SA, Levine OS, Hajjeh R, Mansoor OD, Cherian T. Vaccines to prevent pneumonia and improve child survival. *Bull World Health Organ*. 2008;86:365-72.
- ¹² Mahdi, 2006
- ¹³ Sazawal S, Black RE, Pneumonia Case Management Trials Group. Effect of pneumonia case management on mortality in neonates, infants, and pre-school children: a meta-analysis of community based trials. *Lancet Infect Dis*. 2003;3:547-56.