



# Pneumonia care

**A SELF-CARE WORKBOOK FOR PATIENTS**



## PNEUMONIA CARE

Information about pneumonia . . . . .	1
Cough. . . . .	2
Medications . . . . .	3
Oxygen safety. . . . .	4
Mindful breathing tips . . . . .	5
How to use an incentive spirometer . . . . .	5
Resuming activity. . . . .	6
Information about aspiration pneumonia . . . . .	7
Mouth care. . . . .	8



## OPTIONAL PROGRESS TABLES

Breathing exercises with incentive spirometry . . .	9
Walk. . . . .	10

## RESOURCES

Main Line Health resources . . . . .	11
Urgent care locations . . . . .	11

## QUESTIONS FOR MY TEAM

Notes . . . . .	12
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**THINGS YOU CAN DO:**

- Understand what it means to have pneumonia
- Take all your medications as prescribed by your doctor
- Keep all doctor appointments
- Use oxygen if ordered by your doctor
- Stop smoking
- Maintain good mouth care
- Stay active
- Use your incentive spirometer

## Information about pneumonia

You were diagnosed with and treated for pneumonia. This is an infection in your lungs. It is often treated with antibiotics.

**AM I CONTAGIOUS?**

- Once you leave the hospital, it is very unlikely you are still contagious (able to spread your infection to someone else).
- Avoid spending time with very young children and babies, elderly people or anyone with a suppressed immune system until you finish your antibiotics and feel better.

**WHEN SHOULD I CALL MY DOCTOR?**

- If you develop high fevers (persistently greater than 101°F); low-grade fevers over the first few days after discharge are expected
- If your cough gets **worse** rather than better
- If you have issues with coughing or choking while you're eating or drinking

**WHEN SHOULD I GO TO THE HOSPITAL?**

- If you feel more short of breath or can't catch your breath
- If you have new chest pain or confusion

You should see your regular doctor within one week of hospital discharge to make sure you are recovering well.

Ask your primary care doctor to make sure you are current on your pneumonia, influenza and COVID-19 vaccinations—these can and do prevent hospital admissions and death.



## Cough

- You may continue to cough for days, sometimes even weeks, after your pneumonia is gone.
- The cough is often the last thing to resolve and is your lungs' way of getting rid of the irritating infection.
- Most of the time your cough will gradually improve and then go away.
- You should treat your cough only if it keeps you from sleeping or eating.
- If your cough continues to be bad enough to keep you from sleeping or causes you to vomit, please talk to your doctor about prescription-strength cough medications.
- Please do not start a new medication until you talk to your doctor.
- Information about over-the-counter medications is on the next page.
- The best way to treat a cough is by staying well-hydrated.



### WHAT ELSE CAN I USE FOR MY COUGH?

- Throat lozenges
- Honey
- Tea

## Medications

Types of medicine you may be given to treat pneumonia

Medication	Purpose	Possible side effects and special precautions
<b>Antibiotic</b>  My medication: _____	Treats and fights infection  It is important to take the full course of antibiotics prescribed (even if you are feeling better).	Abdominal discomfort, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting  Skin rash
<b>Guaifenesin (Mucinex®)</b>	Breaks up mucous	Abdominal discomfort, nausea, vomiting  Dizziness, drowsiness, headache  Skin rash
<b>Dextromethorphan (Robitussin®/Delsym®)</b>	Suppresses cough	Abdominal discomfort, nausea, vomiting  Dizziness, drowsiness, nervousness, restlessness
<b>Acetaminophen (Tylenol®)</b>	Treats fever, headache and pain	Only take as directed (Check with your doctor if you have liver disease.)

Please do not start a new medication until you talk to your doctor.

If you are concerned about any side effects, please contact your doctor.

### WHAT ABOUT MY OTHER MEDICATIONS?

If you routinely take other medications (for example, medications for your heart), continue to take them as directed by your doctor.

Patients with heart failure should continue to weigh themselves daily.

# Oxygen safety

Oxygen makes fire burn hotter and faster, so it is important that you reduce chances of fire when using oxygen. Please review the safety guidelines below.

THINGS TO DO	THINGS NOT TO DO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Display an “oxygen in use” sign at the main entrance to your home.</li><li>• Make sure there are working smoke detectors and smoke alarms in your home.</li><li>• Clean and replace your oxygen equipment as instructed.</li><li>• Set the flow rate for only the number of liters ordered by your doctor.</li><li>• Arrange equipment to avoid tripping, especially at night.</li><li>• Oxygen can be drying. You may use saline nasal spray or apply water-based lubricant like K-Y® Jelly to the nasal membranes.</li><li>• Notify your local fire department and power company that you have oxygen in your home.</li><li>• Always be aware of the amount of oxygen left in your tank.</li><li>• Oxygen tanks should be stored upright in an oxygen holder. When no holder is available, oxygen tanks must be placed on their side.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Do not smoke while using oxygen.</li><li>• Do not permit smoking in the room with oxygen.</li><li>• Do not place oxygen within 10 feet of heat (open flame, candle, gas stove, gas dryer, pilot light, wood-burning stove or direct sunlight).</li><li>• Do not place oxygen supply within 10 feet of an electrical appliance or equipment.</li><li>• Do not spray aerosols (such as air freshener or hair spray) near oxygen.</li><li>• Do not apply petroleum-based jelly like Vaseline® to your nose and lips. Petroleum-based jelly can serve as a fuel if ignited.</li><li>• Do not prop or lean oxygen tanks against the wall.</li><li>• Do not change the oxygen flow rate without talking to your doctor.</li><li>• Do not cover the oxygen concentrator with linens or pillows.</li><li>• Do not store oxygen in a closet.</li></ul>

## Mindful breathing tips

If at any point you feel like you are losing your breath or finding yourself getting severely short of breath, **PAUSE**



### **Pause the exercise (or activity)**



**Adjust your position** to a comfortable one that helps your lungs' movement.



**Use pursed-lip breathing** with an inhale count of at least two seconds and an exhale count of at least four seconds; closing your eyes can help the relaxation effects.



**Stabilize your breath** by continuing to use pursed-lip breathing until you feel you have gotten your breath back and/or find that your shortness of breath has improved.



**Engage slowly back into the exercise (or activity)** at comfortable effort and repeat PAUSE as needed. Call your health care provider and/or seek medical attention if you continue to be severely short of breath.



## How to use an incentive spirometer

An incentive spirometer is a tool that measures how well you are filling your lungs with each breath. Learning to take long, deep breaths using this tool can help keep your lungs clear and active.

- Breathe out normally and then close your lips tightly around the mouthpiece.
- Breathe in slowly and deeply through your mouth. The blue ball will rise as you breathe in.
- Hold your breath for three to five seconds, or as long as possible.
- Release the mouthpiece and breathe out slowly.
- Take your time and break between deep breaths so you do not get dizzy.
- This exercise may cause you to cough, which is normal and will help clear mucous from your lungs.
- Try to use your incentive spirometer three times a day (see optional worksheet on page 9).



### ENERGY CONSERVATION TIPS

- You may feel tired and weak after your hospital stay and infection. This is normal.
- Try to get up and move around every day, even for short periods. The more you move, the better your body will feel.
- Return to exercise gradually, as you feel able. You may not feel like doing heavy exercise at first. Start by walking.

## Resuming activity

You're going to be more tired than normal. Here are some tips to help you conserve energy.

- Walk at a slow, comfortable pace.
- Have chairs placed throughout your home to allow rest stops.
- Use a rolling cart to transport items.
- Consider using a walking aid (e.g., wheeled walker).
- Consider use of a shower chair or handheld showerhead.
- Perform grooming tasks seated if fatigued.





### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW WHEN YOU RETURN HOME.

- You may need to be on a special diet. If that's the case, you will receive additional instructions.
- You may also have received instructions for swallowing movements—please keep this with you each time you eat.
- Eat every meal sitting in a chair and remain upright for at least 60 minutes after a meal. This helps prevent reflux, which can also cause aspiration.

## Information about aspiration pneumonia

You may have been told you had aspiration pneumonia. This is a type of pneumonia that is caused by inhaling bits of food, liquid, stomach acid or saliva into your lungs. Some people can aspirate without any signs of trouble. Others may cough during eating or drinking or clear their throat especially after meals. And some may feel like they're choking on food or liquids.

Aspiration pneumonia is treated with antibiotics. Also, some people need to be on a special diet to make it easier for food to go down the “right tube” (into your stomach rather than your lungs).



## Mouth care

Mouth care is very important with any type of pneumonia. Brush your teeth at least two times a day with a toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste.

### IF YOU WEAR DENTURES:

- Remove your dentures every day and rinse off any food particles.
- Clean your dentures every day using a soft-bristle toothbrush and nonabrasive denture cleanser.
- Change your dental adhesive every day.
- If you are not placing your denture back in your mouth after cleaning it, store the denture in a clean container. Cover the denture with clean water and store the container in a safe place.
- Before you place the denture back in your mouth:
  - Brush your gums, tongue and roof of your mouth with a fluoride toothpaste and a soft-bristle brush.
  - Place the moist denture into your mouth after rinsing with clean water.

Date	Morning	Bedtime

# Breathing exercises with incentive spirometer

Record how high you can raise the ball three times a day.



Date	Morning	Afternoon	Evening

# Walk

Walk for increasing amounts of time, at least three times a day.



Date	Morning	Midday	Afternoon	Evening





## Main Line Health resources

### MAIN LINE HEALTH HOMECARE & HOSPICE

Our home health nurses and therapists have advanced training to help you manage your pneumonia. Our team will focus on your goals of care and create a plan that keeps you healthy. We also offer:

- Tips on using your medication safely
- Help with using oxygen safely in your home
- Customized pulmonary rehab program
- Tips that help you avoid hospital trips

Our home health team sees patients in Delaware, Chester, Montgomery and Philadelphia counties. If you live in other areas we can find a home care agency in your neighborhood.

To learn more about Main Line Health HomeCare & Hospice services call **484.580.1601** or visit [mainlinehealth.org/homecare](https://mainlinehealth.org/homecare).

### SmokeFREE PROGRAM

This is a free, state-approved program consisting of six sessions designed to help smokers quit. The program addresses the physical and psychological habit of smoking.

To register for any SmokeFREE class, call **484.227.FREE (484.227.3733)**.

### PA FREE QUITLINE

This is a free program that provides coaching over the phone to help you quit smoking.

**1.800.QUIT.NOW (1.800.784.8669)**

## Urgent care

### Main Line Health Broomall Urgent Care

Lawrence Park Shopping Center  
1991 Sproul Road  
Broomall, PA 19008  
**484.565.1293**

### Main Line Health Concordville Urgent Care

1020 Baltimore Pike  
Glen Mills, PA 19342  
**484.565.1293**

### Main Line Health Exton Square Urgent Care

154 Exton Square Parkway  
Exton, PA 19341  
**484.565.1293**

### Main Line HealthCare in Wynnewood

306 East Lancaster Avenue  
Suite 200  
Wynnewood, PA 19096  
**484.565.1293**

## Notes

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**Main Line Health<sup>®</sup>**

[mainlinehealth.org](https://mainlinehealth.org) | 1.866.CALL.MLH

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