



POLMED®

OUR INVESTMENT OUR HEALTH OUR FUTURE



June 2018

Dear Member

REDUCE YOUR PNEUMONIA RISK THIS WINTER

We all catch colds or the flu from time to time and it can really cause quite a bit of misery, disrupting our personal, family, social and working lives. Since untreated flu may complicate into pneumonia, it is important to take preventative measures to avoid being admitted to hospital for pneumonia.

As of **1 June 2018**, POLMED assists members who have been hospitalised for pneumonia to get home treatment once they are stable.

What is pneumonia?

Pneumonia is a lung infection. Various germs cause pneumonia, e.g. viruses and bacteria. These germs are mostly spread from person to person via droplets when sneezing or coughing.

Who is affected by pneumonia?

Anyone can contract pneumonia, but certain factors could increase your risk, such as:

- Adults aged 60 years and older.
- Children younger than 2 years of age.
- Chronic lung disease (e.g. emphysema) and other chronic conditions such as heart disease and diabetes.
- History of major stroke.
- Recent hospital admission.
- Having a weakened immune system.

What are the symptoms of pneumonia?

- Fever
- Shortness of breath
- Coughing
- Chest pain
- Nausea and vomiting
- Weakness and general discomfort

Note: In older patients, the first sign may be confusion.

How can I prevent pneumonia?

Although it's not possible to completely prevent pneumonia, there are steps you can take to lower your risk:

- **Get vaccinated.** Consider getting the pneumococcal and influenza vaccine before surgery or hospital admission, especially if you're older than 65 or have a weakened immune system due to another illness. POLMED offers a pneumococcal vaccine for eligible members once a year. The vaccine is paid from the preventative healthcare benefit and therefore doesn't affect your out-of-hospital limit (day-to-day benefits).

- **Take your medication as prescribed.** If you have been hospitalised for pneumonia or any other illness, make sure you take your medication and follow the treatment and aftercare plan that your doctor has recommended.
- **Quit smoking.** Smoking damages your body's natural defences against the bacteria and viruses that cause pneumonia.
- **Follow a healthy, active lifestyle.** This includes consuming alcohol in moderation, following a balanced diet, maintaining a healthy sleep routine, keeping your weight in check, and getting regular, moderate exercise.

What is the treatment for pneumonia?

Outpatient antibiotics and observation may be a first treatment option. Adults with mild to moderately severe pneumonia may be managed at primary healthcare level (e.g. by a general practitioner), depending on their response to the initial treatment. Only patients with extensive disease and a confirmed diagnosis of pneumonia who cannot be controlled as an outpatient, need to be hospitalised.

What if I need to be admitted to hospital?

In the event that you need to be hospitalised for pneumonia, please ensure that you or your doctor requests pre-authorisation from POLMED. Once stable, intravenous therapy may be continued at home.

If you have any questions or need more information, please call POLMED on 0860 765 633.

Kind regards,

POLMED