Care Gram
Pneumonia

What Is Pneumonia?
Pneumonia is a serious infection of your lungs, usually caused by a virus or bacteria. This infection causes the air sacs in the lungs to fill with pus and fluid resulting in a lack of oxygen in the blood stream. If there is too little oxygen in your blood, your body cells cannot work right. Because of the lack of oxygen and spreading infection, pneumonia can cause death.

Risk Factors
- People who are age 65 or older
- People with chronic health problems, such as diabetes, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and heart failure

Tests to Help with Diagnosis
- Chest X-ray
- Blood tests
- Collection of sputum or phlegm

Symptoms
- Cough which may be productive with yellow or green mucous (rarely cough up blood)
- Chest pain
- Chest pain that is worse with breathing
- Shaking chills
- Shortness of breath or breathlessness
- High fever

When Pneumonia Gets Worse:
- Breathing is fast, shallow, and painful
- Heart rate gets faster
- The skin may turn bluish in color and the person may sweat a lot
- Older adults may be confused or have a change in level of consciousness

Treatment
Many people who have pneumonia can be treated at home without coming to the Hospital.

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Medications
- Since bacteria often are the cause of pneumonia, antibiotics may be prescribed to cure it.
- Finish all of the antibiotics as prescribed by your doctor. Do not share antibiotics with other people.
- Take all medications prescribed by your doctor until gone.
- If you cannot afford your medications, please contact Jane Melin, R.Ph. at (220) 564-4328, to learn more about our Prescription Assistance Program at Licking Memorial Hospital (LMH).

Activity
- Get plenty of bed rest.

Diet
- Drink at least 8 cups a day of clear fluids, such as water or fruit juice.

Smoking
- Smoking makes pneumonia worse. Quitting is the best thing you can do to feel better.
- Pick a date to stop and tell friends and family.
- LMH can help you quit through the "Quit for Your Health" Tobacco Cessation Program. Ask your nurse for information.
- For support and help call the Ohio Tobacco Quit Hotline at 1-800-QUIT-NOW.

Vaccines
- Flu vaccine – Get a flu shot every year and stay out of crowds in the winter.
- Pneumonia vaccine – Ask your doctor about receiving a pneumonia vaccine.

Infection Control
- Cover your cough.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Do not take an antibiotic unless your doctor prescribes it for you.
- If you do take antibiotics, finish all of the medicine.

When to Call the Doctor
Make sure you follow up with your doctor.

Call Your Doctor if:
- Your symptoms get worse
- You have an ongoing high fever
- You cough up blood