

Pneumonia Care – How do we compare?

At Licking Memorial Health Systems (LMHS), we take pride in the care we provide. To monitor the quality of that care, we track specific quality measures and compare them to benchmark measures. Then, we publish them so you can draw your own conclusions regarding your healthcare choices.

Check out our Quality Report Cards online at www.LMHealth.org.

1 Best practice in pneumonia care says that a blood culture should be collected before any antibiotics are given to a pneumonia patient to more accurately determine which microorganism is causing the pneumonia.

	LMH 2010	LMH 2011	LMH 2012	National ⁽¹⁾
Patients receiving blood cultures prior to antibiotics	97%	100%	100%	97%
ICU pneumonia patients given the most appropriate antibiotic	76%	90%	100%	100%
Non-ICU pneumonia patients given the most appropriate antibiotic	97%	98%	99%	100%

2 Hospitalized patients with a condition that puts them at risk for developing complications from pneumonia and/or influenza (flu) should be screened for vaccines while in the hospital and receive a pneumonia and/or influenza vaccine, if appropriate.

	LMH 2010	LMH 2011	LMH 2012	National ⁽¹⁾
High-risk patients screened for the pneumonia vaccine	NA	NA	94%	88%
Patients screened for the influenza vaccine	NA	NA	94%	86%

3 Licking Memorial Health Professionals (LMHP) office patients who are at high risk for these illnesses are also screened and vaccinated as appropriate. LMHP physicians strongly encourage patients over the age of 65 years to receive a one-time dose of pneumonia vaccine and an annual influenza vaccine during each “flu season,” which runs from October to March.

	LMHP 2010	LMHP 2011	LMHP 2012	National ⁽³⁾
Physician office patients over 65 years receiving the pneumonia vaccine	88%	87%	87%	69%
Physician office patients over 65 years receiving the influenza vaccine	83%	82%	82%	60%

4 LMHS is committed to providing and encouraging free, easily accessible flu vaccines to all employees. In order to provide the safest care to our community, LMHS recognizes the importance of keeping the staff healthy.

	LMHS 2010	LMHS 2011	LMHS 2012	National ⁽⁴⁾	LMHS Goal
LMHS employees receiving the influenza vaccine	83%	84%	84%	72%	greater than 80%

Data Footnotes: (1) *Hospitalcompare.hhs.gov national benchmarks.* (2) *Comparative data from the Midas Comparative Database.* (3) *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey Data.* Atlanta, Georgia: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [2012]. (4) *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Interim Results: Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Coverage Among Health-Care Personnel.* MMWR April 2, 2010/59 (12); pages 357-362.

Patient Story – Jeff Watkins

If anyone had any doubts about Jeff Watkins' passion for fly fishing, his experience last spring would make them true believers. Despite a painful and dangerous injury early in the day on April 18, Jeff continued fishing, never imagining that he was casting out on a months-long battle with fractured bones and pneumonia.

Jeff lives in Granville and works as Director of Field Services for the national non-profit U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance, based in Columbus. As a healthy, active 61-year-old, Jeff is interested in many types of outdoor sports, and particularly enjoys the man-versus-nature activity of fly fishing. So it was with high spirits on that spring day, that he and a friend started out before daybreak on a two-hour drive up to the Rocky River in Chagrin Falls, located in Cuyahoga County, Ohio.

"We were fishing for steelhead trout that come out of Lake Erie. They can weigh between 6 to 15 pounds," Jeff explained. "We got there around daylight and fished in the river wearing our chest waders for a couple of hours. We caught a couple of nice-sized fish and then decided to go a little upstream. There was a big tree across the river, so we had to climb up onto the river bank. I walked a couple of hundred yards along the leaf-covered bank, and as I stepped down the hill on slippery leaves, both of my feet went up in the air. I came down with all my weight on a tree root that was sticking out of the ground about a foot. I landed directly on my left side, and it knocked the wind out of me."

But, the lure of the river was calling. As soon as the initial torrent of pain ebbed, Jeff put on a brave face, assured his friend that he was fine, and waded back into the river to fish for several more hours. "The pain kept getting worse throughout the day," Jeff admitted. "At dark, we walked back to the truck, and my friend became more concerned. He asked me if I was having trouble breathing, and I told him that my breathing was fine. However, I could hardly get my waders off – I was in agony, especially after the two-hour ride back home. When I walked through the door of my house around 11:00 p.m., my wife, Pam, wanted to take me to the Emergency Department (ED) right away. However, I was so exhausted that I said I would go in the morning. I took a couple of over-the-counter pain relievers and got a little sleep."

The next morning at the Licking Memorial Hospital (LMH) ED, Jeff A. Bare, D.O., examined Jeff and quickly ordered X-rays in the ED's radiology room. The images revealed that Jeff had fractured three ribs on his left side, and fortunately, his lung had not been punctured. He was given a prescription for a pain reliever, along with recommendations to rest at home.



In this 2009 photo, Jeff Watkins of Granville, displays an approximately 16-pound salmon he caught while fishing on the Manistee River in northern Michigan. In 2013, Jeff suffered three broken ribs in a fishing accident in Cuyahoga County, Ohio. Complications quickly set in, and he was admitted to LMH with pneumonia.

In addition, Jeff had been treated for asthma for many years, and he was given a spirometer, with instructions to use it every hour in a preventive measure to keep his lungs clear.

"The next day I felt a little better," Jeff recalled, "but on the following day, it was hurting to breathe. Pam said that I seemed really lethargic and 'out of it.' I was lightheaded and my breathing was very shallow. She rushed me back to the ED.

After she explained to the registration staff how sick I was, they took me right back to a patient room." Petter A. Vaagenes, D.O., ordered a CT scan which showed that Jeff had pneumonia in both lungs. "It developed that quickly – in just two days! Because of the pain from the fractured ribs, I had not been breathing as deeply as normal, which allowed fluid and bacteria to collect," Jeff said.

Jeff was admitted to a patient room at LMH and began antibiotic treatment and respiratory therapy immediately. The next day, he was given a single dose of pneumovax vaccine to protect from future bouts of pneumonia. By the third day, he was ready to go home. "I was a lot better by Wednesday," Jeff stated. "One week later, I went back to work, although I was walking gingerly because I was still really sore."

After a few weeks, Jeff saw his internal medicine physician, Gerald Ehram, M.D., for a follow-up visit. "I just was not feeling like I was recovering as quickly as I should," Jeff said. "Dr. Ehram ordered a new round of antibiotics. Within a couple of weeks, I had starting walking again, and doing aerobic exercise to work my lungs. Until the accident, I had always been very active, going to the gym three or four days a week. The walking really helped me recover more quickly, and now I am back to my normal routine."

Like a true sportsman, Jeff still has pleasant memories of the day in Rocky River, and even the following events. "My friend was having really good luck with the fish," Jeff said. "He felt terrible when he found out how badly I had been hurt, but we joked about how difficult it is to leave when the fish are biting. I also had my beliefs in Licking Memorial Hospital confirmed. I thought the care at the Hospital was great. Even though the ED was packed during that first visit, I received attention very quickly. I was very happy with the care that I received."

Individuals of all ages can develop pneumonia. There are some steps that can help reduce the risk of the dangerous disease, including: avoiding smoking, washing hands frequently, receiving an annual flu shot, and receiving a pneumonia vaccine if recommended by the family physician.

Pneumonia Risk Is Lowered by Vaccines

Pneumonia, a serious and potentially life-threatening infection of the lungs, can affect anyone. It most commonly occurs in older adults over the age of 65 years, young children under the age of 2 years, hospital inpatients who are on ventilators and individuals with compromised immune systems. Pneumonia can also develop as a complication of another illness, such as influenza or bronchitis.



This stock image shows an active case of pneumonia on the patient's left lung (on the right side of the photo.)

Pneumonia infections are usually caused by bacteria or viruses, and by fungi in rare instances. These micro-organisms are plentiful in the environment and also can be found in the mouth, nose and sinus cavities. Most individuals with healthy immune systems can fight off mild cases of diseases such as the flu, but they may incur a small breach in the body's defenses that allows pneumonia infection to enter the lungs.

“That is the reason we stress the importance of a flu vaccine for practically everyone,” stated Eric R. Pacht, M.D., of Licking Memorial Pulmonology. “Even a mild case of the flu puts a patient at risk for pneumonia infection. The delicate, protective lining in the nose and bronchial tubes may be damaged by the flu illness, creating an easy pathway for the pneumonia organisms to travel down to the lungs. It is not uncommon for a patient to recover from a bout of the flu, just to become severely ill with pneumonia a few days later.”

Most cases of pneumonia are caused by bacteria and are “community-acquired,” meaning that the illness was contracted through germs that were spread outside of a hospital or other healthcare facility. In contrast, “healthcare-acquired” or “hospital-acquired” pneumonia is the term used for lung infections that develop during a patient's stay at a healthcare facility, or shortly thereafter. In particular, patients who have been intubated for surgery, and inpatients who have used a ventilator are at increased risk for developing pneumonia. Licking Memorial Hospital uses a “ventilator bundle” that includes five elements to prevent ventilator-associated pneumonia or other complications from developing:

- Raising the head of the patient's bed between 30 and 40 degrees
- Giving the patient medication to prevent stomach ulcers
- Preventing blood clots when patients are inactive
- Checking whether patients can breathe on their own
- Providing excellent oral hygiene

According to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, those who are most at risk of developing community-acquired pneumonia include:

- Infants who are 2 years old or younger because their immune systems are not fully developed
- Seniors who are older than 65 years of age
- Individuals with a weakened immune system, including patients with diabetes, heart disease, HIV, or organ transplants
- Patients receiving chemotherapy
- Those who have difficulty coughing or swallowing
- Those who smoke tobacco or abuse alcohol
- Those who are frequently exposed to airborne particulates, such as smoke, dust, mold or chemicals

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends the following pneumonia vaccination schedule for children and adults:

- All adults, 65 years of age and older
- Anyone, 2 through 64 years of age, who has a long-term health problem, such as heart disease, lung disease, sickle cell disease, diabetes, alcoholism, cirrhosis, leaks of cerebrospinal fluid or cochlear implant
- Anyone, 2 through 64 years of age, who has a disease or condition that lowers the body's resistance to infection, such as Hodgkin's disease, lymphoma or leukemia, kidney failure, multiple myeloma, nephrotic syndrome, HIV infection or AIDS, damaged spleen, removed spleen or organ transplant
- Anyone, 2 through 64 years of age, who is taking a drug or treatment that lowers the body's resistance to infection, such as long-term steroids, certain cancer drugs or radiation therapy
- Any adult, age 19 through 64, who smokes tobacco or has asthma

A single dose of pneumonia vaccine is usually recommended for patients who are 65 years or older. A second dose is recommended for patients over the age of 65 if they received their first dose before the age of 65, and at least 5 years have passed since that first dose.

A second dose of pneumonia vaccine is recommended for children and adults, age 2 through 64 years, if at least five years have passed since their first dose, and they:

- Have a damaged spleen or no spleen
- Have sickle-cell disease
- Have HIV infection or AIDS
- Have cancer, leukemia, lymphoma, multiple myeloma
- Have nephrotic syndrome
- Have had an organ or bone marrow transplant
- Are taking medication that lowers immunity, such as chemotherapy or long-term steroids

Patients who would like to learn more about the pneumonia vaccine are invited to contact their physician's office. Immunizations are available at many Licking Memorial Health Systems physician offices. The cost of the vaccine is covered by most major medical insurance companies.



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Please take a few minutes to read this month's report on **Pneumonia Care**.

You'll soon discover why Licking Memorial Hospital is measurably different ... for your health!

Visit us at www.LMHealth.org

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Health Tips - 12 Reasons to Get the Flu Vaccine This Year

1. Everyone is at risk for becoming seriously ill with the flu.
2. If you stay healthy, you will not spread the flu to your loved ones. If a large number of community members are vaccinated, a "herd immunity effect" will offer some degree of protection for individuals who do not receive the vaccine.
3. If you stay healthy, you will not spread the flu to those who have weakened or undeveloped immune systems, such as young children or patients with chronic diseases. The flu can be very serious, even life-threatening, for those individuals.
4. It is especially important to receive the flu vaccine if you live or work in an area where people are in close proximity to each other, such as childcare centers, dormitories and nursing homes.
5. Even if you received a flu vaccine last year, it is important to receive a new dose each year since the formula is customized to ward off the unique viral strains that arise each flu season.
6. Avoiding the flu is an important precaution toward preventing the development of pneumonia, which can be life-threatening.
7. There is usually very little, if any, pain associated with a flu shot.
8. You cannot catch the flu from a flu shot since it contains inactivated viruses.
9. Options are now available for those who could not have the flu vaccine in previous years due to egg allergies.
10. A nasal spray version of flu vaccine is available for select patients who want to avoid an injection.
11. The flu vaccine is now readily available at physician offices and many retail pharmacies, often without an appointment.
12. The cost of the flu vaccine is often completely covered by health insurance or Medicare.