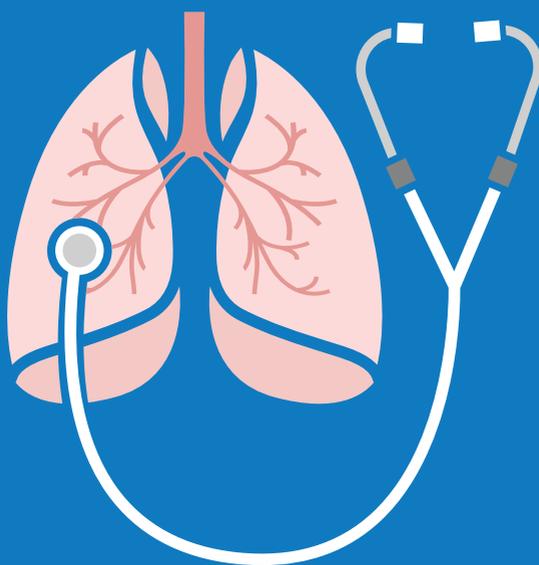




Sir Brian Bell  
Foundation  
Supporting Health and Education in PNG



# WORLD PNEUMONIA DAY

- November 12th, 2017 -

**STOP PNEUMONIA: INVEST IN CHILD HEALTH**

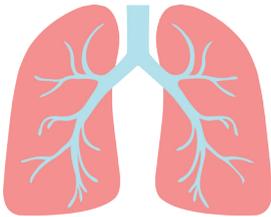
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## WORLD PNEUMONIA DAY 12th November 2017

### – STOP PNEUMONIA: INVEST IN CHILD HEALTH –

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In 2015 pneumonia killed 920,136 children under the age of 5 accounting for 16% of all deaths in children under 5 despite being preventable and treatable. World Pneumonia Day marked annually on November 12th to generate awareness and create action around one of the world's leading infectious killers of children aged under five years old. This year, advocates around the world will rally to the theme: "Stop Pneumonia: Invest in Child Health." Pneumonia is one of the most solvable problems in global health, and yet a child dies from the infection every 20 seconds according to World Health Organization (WHO). Those living in poor communities are at highest risk of pneumonia and although vaccines and other preventative efforts are decreasing the burden of the disease, much more work is still required. This year's theme also underscores the consequences of the illness, from nutritional deficits to missing out on school to catastrophic economic spending for families who miss work or must pay for treatment. Every child, regardless of where they are born, deserves access to lifesaving vaccines and medicines.

The WHO and UNICEF integrated Global action plan for pneumonia and diarrhea (GAPD) aims to accelerate pneumonia control with a combination of interventions to protect, prevent, and treat pneumonia in children with actions to:

**Protect:** children from pneumonia including promoting exclusive breastfeeding and adequate complementary feeding;

**Prevent:** pneumonia with vaccinations, hand washing with soap, reducing household air pollution, HIV prevention and cotrimoxazole prophylaxis for HIV-infected and exposed children;

**Treat:** pneumonia focusing on making sure that every sick child has access to the right kind of care, either from a community-based health worker or in a health facility if the disease is severe and can get the antibiotics and oxygen they need to get well.

### WHAT IS PNEUMONIA?

Pneumonia is an infection of the lungs which can cause mild to severe illness in people of all ages. The lungs are made up of small sacs called alveoli, which fill with air when a healthy person breathes. When an individual has pneumonia, the alveoli are filled with pus and fluid which makes breathing painful and limits oxygen intake.

There are five main causes of pneumonia: Bacteria, viruses, mycoplasmas, fungi and various chemicals. Bacteria, viruses, or fungi that live in your nose, mouth, sinuses or the surrounding environment can enter your lungs and create infections, including pneumonia. You can then receive the bacteria or viruses from people who are infected if they are not experiencing symptoms. The most common causes are:

- Streptococcus pneumoniae: the most common cause of bacterial pneumonia in children;
- Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib): the second most common cause of bacterial pneumonia;
- Respiratory syncytial virus is the most common viral cause of pneumonia;

In infants infected with HIV: Pneumocystis jiroveci is one of the most common causes of pneumonia, responsible for at least one-quarter of all pneumonia deaths in HIV-infected infants.

While most healthy children can fight the infection with their natural defences, children whose immune systems are compromised are at higher risk of developing pneumonia. A child's immune system may be weakened by malnutrition or undernourishment, especially in infants who are not exclusively breastfed. Pre-existing illnesses, such as symptomatic HIV infections and measles, also increase a child's risk of contracting pneumonia according to WHO.

## SYMPTOMS OF PNEUMONIA

Pneumonia symptoms can vary from mild to severe, depending on the type of pneumonia you have, your age and health. Those with pneumonia may experience:

- A cough (greenish, yellow or bloody mucus with some pneumonias)
- Fevers (may be mild or high)
- Shaking/chills
- Shortness of breath
- Sharp or stabbing chest pain (worse with deep breaths or cough)
- Loss of energy
- Loss of appetite
- Confusion in the elderly
- Very severely ill infants may be unable to feed or drink and may also experience unconsciousness, hypothermia, and convulsions.

If you or a loved one are experiencing any signs of pneumonia, it's important to see a doctor for evaluation, especially babies, children and the elderly as it can be life threatening. If the affected person has trouble breathing see your nearest Emergency Department.

## DIAGNOSING PNEUMONIA

Pneumonia can be diagnosed through a physical exam, diagnostic tests, and medical history. During an exam, your doctor will listen to your lungs with a stethoscope if you have pneumonia your lungs may make crackling, bubbling, and rumbling sounds when you inhale or may hear wheezing. Diagnostic tests including a chest X-Ray, blood or sputum test, pleural fluid culture or CT scan may also be required.

## TREATMENT OF PNEUMONIA

Treatment for pneumonia depends on the type of pneumonia (viral/bacterial) a person is infected with and how severe it is and if you have any other chronic diseases. Bacterial pneumonia is treated with antibiotics. Viral pneumonia is treated with antiviral medicines, if it is diagnosed early enough, and antibiotics may be prescribed to prevent against secondary infections or complications. The goals of treatment are to cure the infection and prevent complications. Most people can be treated at home by drinking plenty of fluids to bring up phlegm and help loosen secretions, get plenty of rest, only taking medications or antibiotics as advised by your doctor. Fevers can be controlled with aspirin (not to be given to children), nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs, such as ibuprofen or naproxen), or acetaminophen. Many patients feel better shortly after prescribed medications however additional treatments may be required if the patient doesn't feel better after a few days. Hospitalization is recommended only for severe cases of pneumonia, however, is required if you have another serious medical problem, are experiencing severe symptoms, unable to care for yourself at home, difficulty eating or drinking, older than 65 or a young child or not improving with antibiotics. Recovery is aided by adequate sleep, avoiding overexertion, drinking plenty of fluids, and avoiding cigarette smoke.

## PREVENTION OF PNEUMONIA

While not all cases of pneumonia can be prevented, but taking certain measures can help such as:

**Vaccination:** Pneumonia can be caused by a number of different bacteria, viruses, or other infecting organisms. Vaccines that protect against two major causes of pneumonia are available; pneumococcal vaccines and influenza vaccines, as well as some of the less common causes such as pertussis, are also available. Vaccination is particularly important for adults who are 65 or older, children, smokers, people with weakened immune systems, and people who have certain chronic illnesses. Specific vaccination recommendations vary by age and other factors. Talk to your doctor about vaccination today.

**Nutrition:** Adequate nutrition is key to improving children's natural defences against pneumonia and other illnesses, starting with exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life. In addition to being effective in preventing pneumonia, it also helps to reduce the length of the illness if a child does become ill according to World Health Organization. Adults who follow a healthy diet and exercise regularly also decrease their pneumonia risk.

**Exclusive Breastfeeding:** Infants who are exclusively breastfed have a lower risk of infection and severe disease than those who lack this important source of antibodies from the mother. Research has shown that it can lead to a 23% reduction in pneumonia incidence. Infants between the ages of 0-5 months who aren't breastfed at all face an enormous risk of dying from pneumonia; they're 15 times more likely to die from this respiratory illness than infants who are exclusively breastfed.

**Environmental:** Addressing environmental factors such as indoor air pollution, cooking and heating with biomass fuels and encouraging good hygiene in crowded homes also reduces the number of children who fall ill with pneumonia.

**Practice Good Hygiene:** Practicing good hygiene and health habits such as washing your hands regularly with soap and water and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces can help prevent pneumonia and other respiratory infections and saves lives. Many infections start when hands are contaminated with disease-causing bacteria and viruses, which can occur after using the toilet, changing a child's diaper, coughing, sneezing, touching other people's hands, and touching other contaminated surfaces according to the Global Handwashing Partnership. Evidence suggests that washing hands with soap after defecation and before eating could cut the respiratory infection rate by about 21-25 percent. A single gram of human faeces can contain 10 million viruses and one million bacteria, and infant faeces are particularly pathogenic.

Handwashing with soap works by removing bacteria and viruses from hands before they get a chance to cause infections or spread to other people. Two major illnesses that are transmitted on the hands are diarrhoea and pneumonia, many of these deaths can be prevented by handwashing with soap. Other infections that handwashing with soap can help prevent include Ebola, skin and eye infections; intestinal worms, and healthcare-associated infections. A study in Pakistan found that handwashing with soap reduced the number of pneumonia-related infections in children under the age of five by more than 50 percent. Proper handwashing helps prevent the spread of cold and flu by removing viruses that get onto hands from coughs and sneezes. Wash your hands regularly and encourage others to do the same.

