



# Information and Resource Pack

## Pneumonia





**This easy read material and information and resource pack have been made in collaboration with the Integrated Care System, through our LeDeR sub-group.**

This includes:

- Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust
- Coventry City Council
- Coventry University
- George Eliot Hospital
- General Practitioner Representation
- Grapevine
- NHS Coventry and Warwickshire Integrated Care Board
- South Warwickshire University NHS Foundation Trust
- University Hospitals Coventry & Warwickshire
- Warwickshire County Council



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# 1. Introduction

The LeDeR programme within the NHS Coventry and Warwickshire Integrated Care System recognises the largest proportion of deaths within our area are because of respiratory causes, particularly in relation to pneumonia and aspiration pneumonia.

This is reflected in the national statistics, where respiratory disease is one of the biggest causes of death for people with a learning disability in England. In 2021, aspiration pneumonia was found to be the cause of 15% of all respiratory deaths reported to LeDeR.

LeDeR reviews conducted within Coventry and Warwickshire found that 40.6% (2022) and 37.2% (2023) of deaths were attributed to pneumonia.

We, along with our partners, feel strongly that work is required to raise awareness and help to educate individuals, their families and carers, and professionals about how to prevent pneumonia, as well as the symptoms and risks.

We are pleased to have created this Pneumonia Information and Resource Pack. Over time we commit to grow this resource and for it to become a working document for health and social care professionals, carers, people with a learning disability and/or autistic people and their loved ones.

The aim is for it to reach as many people as possible. We welcome and encourage the sharing of this information.

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## 2. Easy Read Information

We have created the following easy read leaflets for pneumonia, the pneumococcal vaccine and aspiration pneumonia. This is to help to increase knowledge and awareness of pneumonia and aspiration pneumonia, including causes, symptoms, and treatment.

We intend for them to be shared as widely as possible and encourage the use across the public domain, NHS and independent health and social care providers.

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## 2a. Pneumonia Easy Read

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# Easy Read Guide to Pneumonia [Nyoo] + [moh] + [nee] + [uh]

This information explains the causes and symptoms of pneumonia, how it can be treated and ways to avoid it.

It was written with our LeDeR Subgroup.

This made sure we included the voices from our experts with lived experience from Grapevine, NHS acute trusts, primary care and social care.



## 1. What is pneumonia?



Pneumonia is a type of chest infection where the air sacs in your lungs become inflamed (swollen and sore) and fill with fluid or pus.



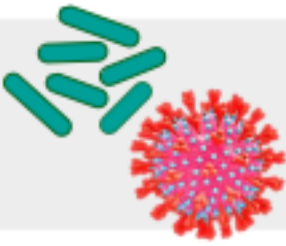
It makes it difficult to breathe.



Pneumonia can make you feel unwell, but doctors can treat it.



## 2. What causes pneumonia?



Pneumonia is usually caused by a bacterial or viral infection.



You can catch pneumonia from someone else if they already have the infection.



You can also get it if you have had another infection such as flu or COVID.



Like flu, it is more common in the winter.

### 3. What are the symptoms of pneumonia?

Symptoms of pneumonia can start quickly, or they can start over several days.

Symptoms can include:



- **A cough**

you may cough up yellow or green mucus (phlegm).



- **Shortness of breath**

This is when you feel you cannot get enough air.



- **A high temperature**



- **Chest pain**



- **An aching body**



- **Feeling very tired**



- **Loss of appetite**



- **Making wheezing noises when you breathe**

Babies may also make grunting noises



- **Feeling confused**

This is common in older people

## 4. What to do if you have symptoms of pneumonia



If you have any of the symptoms listed, call your doctor. You **need** an appointment to see if you need any medication.

It is very important to see your doctor urgently, call 111, or get help from 111 online if:



- You have had a cough for 3 weeks or more



- You are coughing up blood



- You have chest pain that comes and goes, or when you breath or cough



- You are feeling short of breath



Call 999 if:



- You are struggling to breathe or if you are choking, gasping and unable to speak.



- You have pale, blue or blotchy skin, lips or tongue



- You suddenly feel confused, for example, you do not know where you are

## 5. How to treat pneumonia.



When you see your doctor, they will listen to your breathing, take your temperature and may take a blood test. They will decide if you need some medication to make you feel better.



Pneumonia is treated with antibiotics. It is important that you take all the antibiotics in the way your doctors have asked you to, even if you start to feel better.



It is important to rest.



Make sure you drink 6-8 glasses of fluids per day.



Your doctor may also suggest you take medication to help if your muscles ache.



If you do not feel better after you have finished your antibiotics, or your symptoms are getting worse, you must go back to see your doctor.



Most people are treated at home.



Some people are more at risk of becoming seriously ill.

You may need to go to hospital for treatment if:



- **You are over 65**



- **You have a heart problem**  
such as cardiovascular  
[card] + [e] + [o] + [vas] + [kew] + [lar]  
disease, or a long-term lung condition



- **Your baby or young child has pneumonia**



- **You are very unwell**

## 6. How long will it take you to get well / better?



You should start to feel better 48 hours (2 days) after your antibiotics have started. If you do not feel any better after 72 hours (3 days), please contact your doctor.



Getting well is different for everyone; this is because we are all different ages with different health problems.



Most people feel better between 2-4 weeks; however, some people take up to 6 months to recover fully.



Your doctor might ask you to have a chest X-ray 6-12 weeks (about 3 months) later, to make sure the pneumonia has cleared up.



At the end of your course of antibiotics you may still be coughing a bit but overall should be feeling much better. If you do not feel any better, please contact your doctor.

## 7. What can you do to avoid pneumonia?



Where possible, try not to smoke and avoid being around people who are smoking.



If you use inhalers, use them as your doctor recommends.



Stay as active as you can.



Keep yourself and your home as clean and warm as possible.



Having the pneumonia, COVID and flu vaccinations helps to prevent against these infections.



## 2b. Pneumococcal Vaccine

### Easy Read



# Easy Read Guide to the Pneumococcal [Nyoo] + [moh] + [kok] + [al] Vaccine

This information is about the pneumococcal vaccine, how it works and who can get this vaccine.

It was written with our LeDeR Subgroup.

This made sure we included the voices from our experts with lived experience from Grapevine, NHS acute trusts, primary care and social care.



## 1. How do vaccinations work?



A vaccine is a medicine that helps people fight off a serious disease. Some people call a vaccine a jab or injection.



Vaccines teach your immune system how to create antibodies that protect you from diseases.



It's much safer for your immune system to learn this through a vaccination than by catching the diseases and treating them.



Once your immune system knows how to fight a disease, it can often give you lifelong protection.



Millions of lives are saved each year due to vaccinations.



If you have worries about injections, speak to your doctor about how they can help with this.

## 2. What is the pneumococcal vaccine?



The pneumococcal vaccine helps protect against serious illnesses like pneumonia, [nyoo] + [moh] + [nee] + [uh] sepsis and meningitis [men] + [in] + [jy] + [tis].

It is recommended for people with a learning disability and adults aged 65 and over.



This vaccine cannot cause an infection.



This vaccine is free from your doctor.

### 3. Possible side effects of this vaccine.

All vaccines are tested before they are used so they are safe.

Like all medicines, this vaccine can cause side effects, but not everyone gets them.

The most common side effects of this vaccine include:



- **Swelling or pain** where the injection was given.



- **A high temperature**



- **Feeling tired**



- **Loss of appetite**



Most serious side effects such as a severe allergic reaction are very rare and usually happen within minutes.

The person who vaccinates you will be trained to deal with allergic reactions and treat them immediately.

## 4. Who can get the vaccine?



This vaccine is recommended for babies, older people, people with a learning disability and people with other health conditions which would make you at higher risk of getting seriously ill from pneumococcal infections.



Most people can have this vaccine if they need it, including if you're pregnant or breastfeeding.



Ask your doctor if you can have this vaccine.



You can ask your doctor to have the vaccine at any time, but a good opportunity would be during your learning disability annual health check.

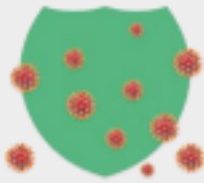


You cannot have the vaccine if you've had a serious allergic reaction to a previous dose of the vaccine or an ingredient in the vaccine.



If you are unsure about whether you should get this vaccine, speak to someone at your doctor's surgery.

## 5. How well will the vaccine work and how long does it last for?



Vaccination gives the best protection against pneumococcal infections.



It helps protect against the most common and serious types of these infections, but there's still a chance you might get a pneumococcal infection.



You usually have some protection 3 weeks from when you had the vaccine.  
Most adults only need 1 dose of the vaccine for long-term protection.



If you are unsure whether you should get this vaccine or want to talk to someone more about it, speak to a nurse or doctor at your surgery or clinic.



## 2c. Aspiration Pneumonia

### Easy Read

# Easy Read Guide to Aspiration [Asp] + [uh] + [ray] + [shuhn] Pneumonia [Nyoo] + [moh] + [nee] + [uh]

This information explains the causes and symptoms of aspiration pneumonia, how it can be treated and ways to avoid it.

It was written with our LeDeR Subgroup.

This made sure we included the voices from our experts with lived experience from Grapevine, NHS acute trusts, primary care and social care.





## 1. What is aspiration pneumonia?



Aspiration pneumonia is a type of pneumonia that's caused by bacteria entering the lungs and causing a severe infection.



This bacteria usually enters lungs when we accidentally breathe in food, fluid or saliva, instead of it being swallowed.

## 2. What causes aspiration pneumonia?



Aspiration pneumonia happens when fluid or food goes into the lungs (breathed in) instead of into the stomach (swallowed).

You are most at risk of aspiration pneumonia if you have:



- **Swallowing difficulties (dysphagia)**  
If a person's swallow does not work properly, food, drink or other fluids could go down "the wrong way" to the lungs instead of the stomach.



- **Poor oral hygiene**  
If your teeth are not brushed.



- **Difficulty managing own saliva /spit**  
Some people have a lot of saliva in their mouth or are unable to swallow their own saliva.



- **Low weight**



- **Weak cough**



- **Chest deformity**

Some people are born with different shaped chests or spines that may make it more difficult to breathe and cough.



- **Reduced mobility**

If you are unable to stand and walk around.

### 3. What are the symptoms of aspiration pneumonia?

Most common signs especially around mealtimes:



- **Coughing during or just after meals / drinks**



- **Difficulty breathing**

The person may breathe rapidly, gasp or wheeze (look at movement of chest).



- **A wet or gurgly voice around meals**



- **Eyes watering**



- **Raised temperature**



- **Change in skin colour**



- **Any signs of pain/discomfort when eating/drinking**

Other signs could be:



- **Loss of weight**



- **Having a frequent cough**

## 4. What to do if you have symptoms of aspiration pneumonia.



If you have any of the symptoms listed, call your doctor who will arrange an appointment to see you and see if you need any medication (antibiotics).



They may also refer you to see a speech and language therapist to help with your eating and drinking.



It is very important to see your doctor urgently, call 111, or get help from 111 online if:



- You have had a cough for 3 weeks or more



- You are coughing up blood



- You have chest pain that comes and goes or happens when breathing or coughing.



- You are feeling short of breath



Call 999 if:

- **You are struggling to breathe**  
You are choking, gasping and unable to speak.
- **You have**  
Pale, blue or blotchy skin, lips or tongue.
- **You suddenly feel confused**  
For example, you do not know where you are.



## 5. How to treat aspiration pneumonia.



When you see your doctor, they will listen to your breathing, take your temperature and may take a blood test. They will then decide if you need some medication to make you feel better.



Aspiration pneumonia is treated with antibiotics. It is important that you take all the antibiotics in the way your doctors have asked you to, even if you start to feel better.



It is important to rest.



Your doctor may also suggest you take medication to help if your muscles ache.



If you do not feel better after you have finished your antibiotics, or your symptoms are getting worse, you must go back to see your doctor.



Most people are treated at home.



Some people are at risk of becoming seriously ill. You may need to go to hospital for treatment if:



- **You are over 65**



- **You have a heart problem such as cardiovascular disease or a long-term lung condition, such as asthma**  
[card] + [e] + [o] + [vas] + [kew] + [lar]



- **Your baby or young child has pneumonia**



- **You are very unwell**



## 6. How long will it take you to get well / better?



You should start to feel better 48 hours (2 days) after your antibiotics have started. If you do not feel any better at all within 72 hours (3 days), please contact your doctor.



If a speech and language therapist gives you advice to help with your eating and drinking this will also make you feel better.



Getting well is different for everyone; this is because we are all different ages with different health problems.



Most people feel better between 2-4 weeks; however, some people take up to 6 months to recover fully.



Your doctor might ask you to have a chest X-ray 6-12 weeks (about 3 months) later, to make sure the pneumonia has cleared up.



At the end of your course of antibiotics you may still be coughing a bit but overall should be feeling much better. If you do not feel any better, please contact your doctor.

## 7. What can you do to avoid aspiration pneumonia?



You can ask your doctor to refer you to a speech and language therapist if you have difficulties swallowing food or keep getting chest infections.

Always follow any guidance given by them.



You need to have good oral hygiene:

- Your teeth need to be brushed twice a day
- See the dentist regularly



Eat when you are most alert and do not eat if you are drowsy.



Eat slowly and eat small mouthfuls of food.



Stay as active as you can.



Make sure you only eat when you are sat upright with your feet supported.

If you are usually in bed you should sit as upright as you are able or if possible, sit out into a chair for mealtimes.



## 3. Other Helpful Resources

### Resources relating to eating, drinking and swallowing.

Belfast choking advice – easy read

[Choking Awareness | Easy Health](#)

GORD (Gastro-Oesophageal Reflux Disorder) - easy read

[Gastro-Oesophageal Reflux Disorder \(GORD\) | Easy Health](#)

Mouth care leaflet

[PowerPoint Presentation](#)

My eating and drinking matters

[My-eating-and-drinking-matters-Back-to-basics-care-for-people-who-have-difficulties-with-eating-and-drinking.pdf](#)

Dysphagia easy read

[LN005696.pdf](#)

### Resources relating to vaccinations and staying well in winter.

Keeping warm and well easy read

[Keeping warm and well staying safe in cold weather EASY READ-1.pdf](#)

Covid 19 vaccination easy read

[Easy read – A guide to your COVID-19 vaccination](#)

Flu vaccination easy read

[Protect yourself from flu, have the flu vaccine](#)

### Resources relating to other respiratory conditions.

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) easy read

[Lung and Breathing Problems \(COPD\) | Easy Health](#)

Asthma easy read

[All about asthma \(Easy Read\) – Asthma + Lung UK](#)



## Professional guidelines

British Thoracic Society – Clinical statement aspiration pneumonia  
[BTS Clinical Statement on aspiration pneumonia \(1\).pdf](#)

Deaths due to pneumonia in people with a learning disability LeDeR 2024  
[Pneumonia deep dive Canva version](#)

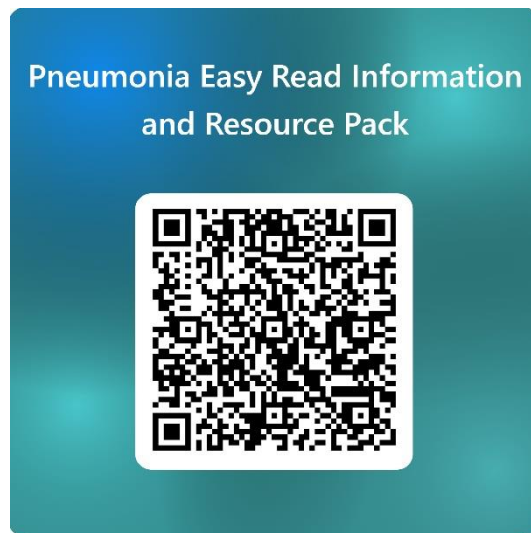
Heslop, P., & Lauer, E. (2024). Strategies to prevent or reduce inequalities in specific avoidable causes of death for adults with intellectual disability: A systematic review. *British Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 52(2), 312–349.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/bld.12576>

## Other Resources

NHS 111 Online  
[Get help for your symptoms - NHS 111](#)

## 4. Feedback and Thanks

We would love to hear what you think of this pack. Please use the QR code or follow the link below to tell us your thoughts.



[Feedback Form](#)

We would like to thank all those who have helped contribute to the production of this resource.