A Closer Look at Pneumonia

Those most at risk of developing pneumonia include children under 5, adults over 65, and those with pre-existing health conditions.

1. Introduction

Pneumonia is a respiratory infection that can affect anyone and is most often caused by a virus or bacteria. Depending on the patient, cases can range from mild to severe, especially in those with weakened immune systems.

Infections like pneumonia can spread by direct contact with other infected patients. Children are some of the most susceptible to pneumonia, accounting for around 15% of deaths among children under 5 years old. With proper treatment and prevention measures, patients of any age can recover.

2. Symptoms

Symptoms may vary from patient to patient depending on the case's severity. Some common ones include:

- Chest pain when breathing or coughing
- Fatigue
- Fever or lower than normal body temperature
- Sweating and shaking chills
- Shortness of breath

3. Causes

Pneumonia can be caused by a variety of bacteria, fungi and viruses, though some are more likely at different stages of life. Children are more likely to develop pneumonia from a viral infection, while adults usually get it from bacteria. Some common causes are:

- Common colds or the flu
- COVID-19
- HMPV or HPIV
- Pneumococcal disease
- Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV)

Though less common, fungal, protozoal or antibiotic-resistant bacterial infections can also cause pneumonia.

4. Treatment & Prevention

Treatment depends on the type and severity of the case, as well as the patient's age and other health conditions. For bacterial pneumonia, antibiotics are typically prescribed. Antiviral medication can be given to patients when a viral infection is the cause. Other treatments aim to reduce symptoms, including controlling fevers, drinking plenty of fluids, and getting rest.

Maintaining a healthy lifestyle, practicing good hygiene, and staying aware of your general health are key parts of prevention. For some, vaccines are also available for some bacteria and viruses that cause pneumonia.

Did you know?

Nearly 15% of all deaths for children under 5 are caused by pneumonia.

For more information on pneumonia, please visit the American Lung Association.

References

Pneumonia Overview and Statistics: World Health Organization

Symptoms of Pneumonia: Mayo Clinic

Pneumonia Causes and Types: Cleveland Clinic

Pneumonia Prevention and Treatment: American Lung Association

How Pneumonia Affects Children: World Health Organization

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