

RESPIRATORY INFECTION FACT SHEET

What is a respiratory infection?

There are many different viruses and bacteria that can cause respiratory infections (such as colds) with fevers.

What are the symptoms of a respiratory infection?

Symptoms may include a runny nose, chills, muscle aches and a sore throat. Individuals may sneeze and cough and be more tired than usual. It is important to check for a fever. Symptoms can last about 7 days and the infection is contagious to others shortly before and while experiencing symptoms. One potential serious complication is pneumonia.

What is pneumonia?

Pneumonia is an infection of the lungs that can cause mild to severe illness in people of all ages. It is the leading cause of death in children younger than 5 years of age worldwide. However, these infections can often be prevented with vaccines and can usually be treated with antibiotics, antiviral drugs (such as Tamiflu), or specific drug therapies. Common signs of pneumonia include cough, fever, and difficulty breathing. You can help prevent pneumonia and other respiratory infections by following good hygiene practices, such as washing your hands regularly and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces.

What is the treatment for a respiratory infection?

Call your provider when a high fever or sore throat or cough does not go away. Antibiotics do not work for illnesses caused by a virus, including colds and respiratory infections. DO NOT give aspirin or salicylate-containing medicines to anyone under 18 year of age.

How is a respiratory infection spread?

- By sneezing or coughing.
- By touching contaminated hands, surfaces, or objects.

It is important for children to stay home from child care and school until fever has resolved for 24 hours and they are healthy enough for normal activities. Notify children's child care or school settings of the infection and symptoms.

How is a respiratory infection prevented?

- Cover nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing. Use a tissue or your sleeve. Dispose of used tissue.
- Wash hands after touching anything that could be contaminated with the secretions from the mouth or nose. Your child may need help with handwashing.
- DO NOT share drink containers and cups or silverware. Wash all dishes with hot soapy water between uses.
- Cleans and disinfect anything that comes in contact with secretions from the nose or mouth. Use a product that kills germs.
- DO NOT exposure your child to second-hand tobacco smoke. Smoke increases the risk for serious respiratory infections and middle ear infections.

Where can I get more information about respiratory infections?

For additional information contact Contra Costa Public Health at (925) 313-6740 or visit the web at: <http://cchealth.org/cd/>