

# Infection Prevention for People with Lung Conditions

Infections are a main cause for people with lung problems having to enter hospitals. If you have a lung condition or lung disease, a cold or the flu can lead to a lung infection. Preventing infection and knowing the signs of illness will help to reduce your need for hospital stays by seeking treatment early. **Get help if you are having trouble breathing. Don't wait!**

## Protect yourself from illness

There are some things you can do to protect yourself from illness:

- Wash your hands often and keep them away from your face. Most germs are spread from your hands to your mouth, nose or eyes.
- Get a flu shot every year. Ask your doctor about the pneumonia vaccine.
- Stay out of crowds, especially when more people have colds.
- Exercise at least every other day.
- Eat a healthy diet with at least 5 fruits and vegetable a day.
- Get enough sleep, at least 7 to 8 hours each night.
- Drink plenty of fluids each day unless you are to limit your fluids.
- Keep your lungs clear of mucus, which can trap germs.
- As much as you can, stay away from air pollution, smog, dusty work areas, smoke, and rooms where strong chemicals and household products like cleaners, paints, glue and aerosol sprays are being used. Read the handout, [Air Quality and Your Lungs](#), for tips on protecting your lungs.

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**Learn more about your health care.**



- ▶ When smog is high or when it is hot and the humidity is high, check the radio or television news for air pollution alerts. During these alerts, stay indoors with the windows closed. Circulate air indoors with a fan or air conditioner. Relax and avoid heavy work.

## **When to Call Your Doctor**

If you get sick, call your doctor right away. The sooner you seek treatment the more likely you are to prevent damage to your airways. Call your doctor at the first sign of illness:

### **Breathing Problems**

- Tightness in your chest that does not go away with your normal medicines
- Increased shortness of breath, trouble breathing or more wheezing
- Coughing more often or harder
- Increase in sputum or change of color in sputum to yellow, green or gray, or blood in your sputum
- Fever or chills

### **Sinus Problems**

- Increased sinus drainage that does not go away with normal medicines
- Nasal congestion or pain along the cheekbones
- Increase in mucus or change of color in mucus to yellow, green or brown

### **Changes in Fluids, Heart Rate or Thinking**

- Fluid retention, such as swelling in your ankles or legs, or **weight gain of 3 to 5 pounds overnight or within a few days**
- Dehydration: less urine, dark urine or dry skin from less fluid
- Heart rate faster or more irregular than usual
- Dizziness, headaches or trouble thinking

- Changes in your vision
- Loss of appetite or nausea
- Confusion
  - ▶ If you are 65 years or older, there is also an increased risk for falls when there are signs of confusion.

### **When Having Signs of Illness**

If you have any of the above signs of illness, call your doctor or health care provider and share this information with them:

- How long you have had your signs
- What medicines you are taking, how much and when
- How your signs are changing (getting better or worse)

❖ **Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have any questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: [health-info@osu.edu](mailto:health-info@osu.edu).**