What is pneumonia?

• Pneumonia is a form of acute respiratory infection that causes inflammation or fluid in the lungs. It makes breathing difficult and limits oxygen intake.¹
• Symptoms of pneumonia include cough, difficulty breathing, fast breathing, chest in-drawing and/or wheezing. If infants are severely ill, they may also be unable to eat or drink and may experience unconsciousness, convulsions, and even death.¹
• In children, the most common bacterial causes of pneumonia are pneumococcus and Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib); the most common viral cause is respiratory syncytial virus (RSV).¹

Who does it most affect?

• Pneumonia is the #1 infectious cause of death for children under age 5 globally, killing an estimated 920,000 children in 2015.² That’s more than 2,500 young lives per day.
• Pneumonia causes 16% of all deaths in children under age 5 worldwide.³
• People at any age can contract pneumonia. However, the most at-risk are children under the age of 5 and individuals with weakened immune systems.
• Children in poor and rural communities are most affected.

What progress has been made?

• Between 2000 and 2015, annual global child deaths due to pneumonia dropped from 1.7 million to an estimated 920,000.⁴

How can pneumonia be controlled?

• Controlling childhood pneumonia requires correct and consistent delivery of an integrated package of interventions to protect children and prevent and treat the disease.
• Many of the interventions targeted at pneumonia also help control other childhood illnesses, such as diarrhea and malnutrition, and should be part of a comprehensive approach to child survival.

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Pneumonia is most often detected by symptoms that may include fever, cough and fast or strained breathing.

• Radiography and laboratory tests can be helpful in confirming pneumonia and identifying the organism causing it. However, use of chest x-ray, blood culture and other tests is limited by cost and technical challenges in many areas of the world.

• Health workers can use a pulse oximeter to assess the level of oxygen in the blood and provide lifesaving oxygen therapy.

• Effective, integrated case management strategies and improving care-seeking behavior ensure that children receive proper and timely diagnosis and treatment.

• WHO recommends amoxicillin dispersible tablets as the only first-line treatment for children under age 5 diagnosed with pneumonia, costing about $0.21-0.42 USD per treatment course.6

Protections

- Exclusive breastfeeding during the first six months of life boosts children’s natural defenses.
- Adequate nutrition and vitamin A supplementation help to ensure a well-functioning immune system and lower the risk of pneumonia and other diseases.

Prevention

- Immunization against *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib), pneumococcus, measles and whooping cough can prevent cases of pneumonia from ever occurring.
- Access to clean water, sanitation and hand-washing with soap help prevent exposure to pathogens that cause pneumonia.
- HIV prevention stops opportunistic pneumonia infections that affect weakened immune systems.
- Globally, more than 50% of pneumonia deaths among children under 5 are linked to household air pollution.5

Treatments

- Families need timely access to affordable health care.