



## ask the doctor

# What causes pneumonia?

By **Beatrice Nakibuuka**

**P**neumonia is an infection of the lungs that can make you cough, get a fever and difficulty in breathing. One can get pneumonia while at school or from hospital through air from an infected person.

### Causes

Dr Vincent Bakyenga, a general doctor at Uganda Healthcare Federation says pneumonia is caused by either bacteria and is usually transmitted when you breathe the germs into your lungs. A person is more at risk of getting pneumonia after having a cold or flu. These illnesses make it hard for the lungs to fight infection.

Also, having a long-term disease such as asthma, heart disease, cancer or diabetes can make a person more likely to get pneumonia.

### Symptoms

Dr Bakyenga says, "A person with pneumonia will have a cough with brown, green or tinged with blood sputum, fever, breathing fast and

feeling short of breath, chest pain that often feels worse when you cough or breathe in, fast heartbeat, feeling very tired or weak, nausea and vomiting and diarrhoea."

### Treatment

Pneumonia can make one feel very sick. But after you take antibiotics as instructed by the doctor, you should start to feel better within three days. Dr Bakyenga advises that you do not stop taking the medication just because you feel better. Take the full dosage of antibiotics. Call your doctor right away if you feel worse. While on treatment, get enough rest. Sleep and drink lots of fluids. If your cough keeps you awake at night, talk to your doctor.

### Prevention

Doctors recommend immunisation for both children and adults with the pneumococcal vaccine. It may not prevent you from getting pneumonia but if you get it, it would not be as bad as someone did not get vaccinated.