Pneumonia is a breathing (respiratory) condition in which there is an infection of the lung. Pneumonia is caused by a viral or bacterial infection that fills your lungs with mucus. This lowers the oxygen level in your blood. Pneumonia is a common illness that affects millions of people each year in the United States.

Ways you can get pneumonia include:

- Bacteria and viruses living in your nose, sinuses, or mouth may spread to your lungs.
- You may breathe some of these germs directly into your lungs.
- You breathe in (inhale) food, liquids, vomit, or fluids from the mouth into your lungs (aspiration pneumonia)

The most common symptoms of pneumonia are:

- Cough (with some pneumonias you may cough up greenish or yellow mucus, or even bloody mucus)
- Fever, which may be mild or high
- Shaking chills
- Shortness of breath (may only occur when you climb stairs)

**Key Indicators**

Scientific evidence indicates that the following measures represent the best practices for the treatment of community-acquired pneumonia. Higher scores are better.

**Oxygenation Assessment**
Pneumonia can lower the oxygen in your blood because the air spaces in your lungs fill with mucus. The oxygen you breathe does not get into your bloodstream. It is important that the amount of oxygen in your blood be measured within 24 hours of arriving at the hospital to see if you need oxygen therapy.

**Initial Antibiotic Timing**
Early treatment with antibiotics can cure bacterial pneumonia and reduce the possibility of complications. This information shows the percent of patients who were given their first dose of antibiotics within 4 hours of arrival at the hospital.

**Pneumococcal Vaccination Status**
The pneumococcal vaccine can help prevent, or lower the risk of complications of pneumonia caused by bacteria. It can also help prevent future infections. Patients with pneumonia should be asked if they have been vaccinated recently for pneumonia and, if not, should be given the vaccine.
**Influenza Vaccination Status**
Flu shots reduce the risk of influenza, a serious and sometimes deadly lung infection that can spread quickly in a community or facility. Hospitals should check to make sure that pneumonia patients, particularly those who are age 50 or older, get a flu shot during flu season to protect them from another lung infection and to help prevent the spread of influenza.

**Blood Cultures Performed in the Emergency Department Prior to Initial Antibiotic Received in Hospital**
Different types of bacteria can cause pneumonia. A blood culture is a test that can help your doctor identify which bacteria may have caused your pneumonia, and which antibiotic should be prescribed. A blood culture is not always needed, but for patients who are first seen in the hospital emergency department, it is important for the accuracy of the test that blood culture be conducted before any antibiotics are started. It is also important to start antibiotics as soon as possible.

**Appropriate Initial Antibiotic Selection**
Pneumonia is a lung infection that is usually caused by bacteria or a virus. If pneumonia is caused by bacteria, hospitals will treat the infection with antibiotics. Different bacteria are treated with different antibiotics.

**Smoking Cessation Advice/Counseling**
Smoking damages your lungs and can make it hard to breath. Smoking increases your chances of getting pneumonia or other chronic lung diseases like emphysema and bronchitis. Smoking is also linked to lung cancer, heart disease, and stroke, and can cause premature death. It is important for you to get information to help you quit smoking before you leave the hospital. Quitting may reduce your chance of getting pneumonia again.

*Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Hospital Compare*