

- Vaccination / Medical awareness

PREVENTING PNEUMONIA

Q My daughter's school just had a health day-off because of a recent pneumonia epidemic in their grade. How was this able to spread so fast? How do we prevent our children from getting pneumonia?



ASK DOC CELESTE
DR. CELESTE GOMEZ

A Since the start of the colder months or “-ber” months, our clinics have seen a slow rise in respiratory infections, both viruses and bacteria across all ages. It may probably be because of the colder weather these days, or maybe because more people are traveling all over the world and, in return, bring viruses back to their home country.

Pneumonia is known to be one of the top causes of morbidity and mortality in very young children. It is a disease where our lung's air sacs and airways are affected. This may be due to viruses like RSV (*Respiratory Syncytial Virus*) or *Influenza*, or bacteria like *Streptococcus* or *Mycoplasma Pneumoniae*. Pneumonia can easily spread especially if one is immunocompromised or if you are less than 2 years old or more than 60 years old. Here are some guidelines to prevent our children from getting Pneumonia:

Avoid crowded places or wear a mask

Pneumonia spreads by droplet infection. This means that it can easily

spread within approximately 3 feet from anyone who coughs or sneezes. Crowded places such as air-conditioned malls, public transportation like the MRT and LRT, and large scale events would always be the perfect place to get a respiratory infection. Wearing a mask (medical grade surgical mask) can at least protect you from acquiring a droplet infection.

Handwashing and hand sanitizers

Studies have shown that after any contact with a suspected person with cough or colds, handwashing or using a medical grade hand sanitizer or alcohol can kill most of the viruses and bacteria that can harm and infect you.

Pneumonia and flu vaccination

The best primary prevention tip is to have your children vaccinated with the pneumococcal vaccine and the yearly flu vaccine to lessen the risk of getting the harmful strains of *Streptococcus Pneumoniae* and *Influenza*. Getting vaccinated lessens the sick days off from school and improves the child's quality of life as their immunity to the infections strengthens.

Zinc supplementation

Doctors might have opposing views on zinc supplementation as an adjunct treatment for pediatric pneumonia. However, a WHO study showed that when zinc sulfate was used for 3 months in children un-



der 5 years old who are malnourished and underweight, they have reported significantly lower rates of infection in return.

Dr. Celeste Gomez, M.D., DPPS is a Visiting Consultant in The Medical City and an Active Consultant in Victor R. Potenciano Medical Center. A graduate of the University of the Philippines, College of Medicine, she is currently a Diplomate of the Philippine Pediatric Society. As a member of the IFM with a medical background, Dr. Celeste balances conventional medicine with appropriate and in-depth personal nutritional and lifestyle advice. She enjoys regular tennis sessions, swimming, and windsurfing.

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