

December 2022

Health and Welfare Alert



Preventing Pneumonia and the Flu #31-12-22

Direct support professionals make the difference in early identification and treatment of pneumonia and the flu. Based on your observations, you may recognize a change in the status of an individual you support that would require further evaluation. If you notice any of the signs and symptoms listed throughout this alert, please seek support from a medical professional.

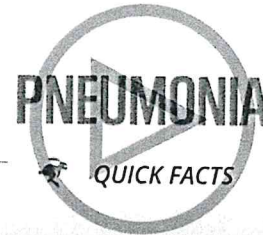
It's important to know that Ohioans with developmental disabilities may be at higher risk for pneumonia and flu due to chronic lung conditions like asthma, emphysema, and chronic bronchitis. Swallowing difficulties, gastroesophageal reflux disease, seizure disorder, tube feeding, cerebral palsy, and being suppressed can all increase the risk of aspiration.

Pneumonia is an infection of the lungs that can cause mild to severe illness. Older adults and people with other respiratory illnesses are at higher risk for pneumonia. Common signs of pneumonia include cough, fever, trouble breathing, fast heartbeat, shaking, or chills.

Aspiration occurs when a person accidentally inhales particles into their airway; report and document it quickly.

Seasonal influenza, also known as the flu, is a viral illness that causes fever, tiredness, cough, sore throat, nasal congestion, body aches, and headaches. It is usually spread from person to person by coughing and sneezing.

Pneumonia: Symptoms, Diagnosis, Treatment, and Prevention



Fast Facts

- In 2021, 120 Ohioans with IDD died due to pneumonia (62) and aspiration pneumonia (58).
- Pneumonia and influenza were the third leading causes of hospitalizations in 2021 for those we serve.
- Pneumonia was the leading cause of hospitalization for Ohioans with IDD from 2016 to 2020.
- During this period, the leading cause of non-accidental/suspicious deaths was aspiration pneumonia.
- Ohioans with developmental disabilities were twice as likely to be admitted to the hospital for the flu in 2017 as people without disabilities.

Get a Flu Shot

Flu vaccines are designed to protect against the influenza viruses that experts predict will be the most common during the upcoming season. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that people get their flu shots before the end of October. However, getting a late flu shot can be better than not getting one at all.