

Fact Sheet: World Pneumonia Day 12 November 2018

Pneumonia – the preventable killer

- Every minute, 2 children die from pneumonia.
- Every year, about 880,000 children under 5 years old die from pneumonia; 80 percent of deaths are in children under 2 years. Most (99 percent) deaths occur in low or middle-income countries.
- 170 million children in low and middle-income countries are not vaccinated against pneumonia. Globally, only 35 percent of eligible children get the required three doses of pneumococcal vaccine.
- Around 40 million episodes of pneumonia go untreated each year. In sub-Saharan Africa, less than half of children with symptoms are taken to a health care provider.
- Pneumonia in early childhood may also increase the likelihood of developing a chronic lung disease such as asthma or chronic obstructive respiratory disease (COPD) in adulthood.
- Pneumonia is also a common cause of death or illness in the elderly, being the single most common cause of death from infectious disease in this group.

Treating and preventing pneumonia

- Pneumonia is commonly caused by bacteria or viruses. Vaccines for children are available to prevent pneumonia from some of the common germs and can PREVENT pneumonia from these.
- Vaccines are available against pneumococcal, measles, *Haemophilus influenzae* type b, pertussis (whooping cough), diphtheria and influenza germs.
- Exclusive breastfeeding for the first 4 to 6 months of life, adequate complementary feeding and good nutrition can also help prevent pneumonia.
- Avoiding cigarette smoke exposure or indoor air pollution, especially during pregnancy and early childhood years, is important to reduce the risk of pneumonia and severe illness.
- Reducing childhood HIV infection through strengthened mother-to-child prevention programmes and early use of antiretroviral therapy, in children who are HIV-infected, is also key to reducing the burden of childhood pneumonia.
- To treat pneumonia, case management guidelines that include indications for hospital referral and the use of antibiotics are effective. Oxygen is life-saving for those with severe disease.

About the Forum of International Respiratory Societies (FIRS)

[The Forum of International Respiratory Societies](#) (FIRS) is an organisation comprised of the world's leading



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international respiratory societies working together to improve lung health globally: [American College of Chest Physicians](#) (CHEST), [American Thoracic Society](#) (ATS), [Asian Pacific Society of Respirology](#) (APSR), [Asociación Latino Americana De Tórax](#) (ALAT), [European Respiratory Society](#) (ERS), [International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Diseases](#) (The Union), [Pan African Thoracic Society](#) (PATS), [Global Initiative for Asthma](#) (GINA), and the [Global Initiative for Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease](#) (GOLD).

The goal of FIRS is to unify and enhance efforts to improve lung health through the combined work of its more than 70,000 members globally.

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