

# Mycoplasma pneumoniae Infection

*Mycoplasma pneumoniae* is a type of bacteria that can cause several different types of infection including chest colds and pneumonia (lung infection). To best protect yourself and others from these bacteria, practice good hygiene by washing your hands often and covering your mouth when you cough or sneeze.

## Signs and Symptoms of Infection

*M. pneumoniae* cause illness by damaging the lining of the respiratory system (throat, windpipe, and lungs). Once someone becomes infected with the bacteria, symptoms usually appear after 1 to 4 weeks. The most common type of infection is tracheobronchitis, commonly known as a chest cold. Symptoms of a chest cold often include:

- Sore throat
- Fatigue (being tired)
- Fever
- Headache
- Slowly worsening cough that can last for weeks or months

Children younger than 5 years old who get *M. pneumoniae* infection could have different, cold-like symptoms:

- Sneezing
- Stuffy or runny nose
- Sore throat
- Watery eyes
- Wheezing
- Vomiting or diarrhea

## Spreads from Person to Person

When someone infected with *M. pneumoniae* coughs or sneezes, they create small respiratory droplets that contain the bacteria. Other people can get infected if they breathe in those droplets. Most people who are exposed for a short amount of time do not get sick. However, it is common for these bacteria to spread between people who live together. If you are sick, be sure to cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze to help prevent spreading the bacteria to others.

## Certain People Are at Increased Risk

People of all ages are at risk for getting *M. pneumoniae* infection, but it is most common among young adults and school-aged children.

People living or working in crowded settings are at increased risk. These settings include:

- Schools
- College residence halls
- Military training facilities
- Long-term care facilities
- Hospitals

People with weakened immune systems or those who are recovering from a respiratory illness are at increased risk for getting a more serious illness from this infection.

## Treatment for Infection

Most cases of *M. pneumoniae* infection are mild and get better on their own without treatment. Antibiotics are used to treat more serious infections, like pneumonia.



U.S. Department of  
Health and Human Services  
Centers for Disease  
Control and Prevention

[www.cdc.gov/mycoplasma](http://www.cdc.gov/mycoplasma)