

Preventing Pneumonia

If you have any questions, please ask your nurse.

Routine mouth care, activity and deep breathing exercises can help prevent pneumonia. Your nurse will review this care with you in more detail.

Oral care

Brush your teeth and use mouthwash in the morning and at night before going to sleep. This will help decrease bacteria (or germs) in your mouth.

Activity

Stay as active as you can. As allowed, walk in the halls at least 3 times a day and eat all of your meals in a chair. The nursing staff can assist you as needed.

Deep breathing and coughing exercises

Use an incentive spirometer 10 times every hour while you are awake. This will help you breathe deeply and cough. Your nurse will show you how to do this. Follow these steps.

Using the incentive spirometer

1. Close your lips tightly around the mouthpiece.
2. Breathe in slowly and deeply through your mouth. The blue disc will rise as you breathe in—try to make it reach the 4000 mark.
3. Hold your breath for 3 to 6 seconds to keep the disc at the highest level you can. Once you can keep the disc at that level most of the time, try a higher level.
4. Release the mouthpiece and breathe out slowly.
5. Cough to help clear mucous from your throat and chest.

Cough deeply from your belly, not just from your throat. If you had chest or abdomen surgery, first brace the area with a pillow or folded blanket. Take pain medicine as prescribed to control any pain, if needed. Follow these guidelines during your hospital stay and as you recover at home.

Para asistencia en español, por favor llamar al Departamento de Representantes para Pacientes al 312.926.3112.

The entities that come together as Northwestern Medicine are committed to representing the communities we serve, fostering a culture of inclusion, delivering culturally competent care, providing access to treatment and programs in a nondiscriminatory manner and eliminating healthcare disparities. For questions, please call either Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Patient Representatives Department at 312.926.3112, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363 or the Northwestern Medical Group Patient Representatives Department at 312.695.1100, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363.

Developed by: NMH Clinical Quality with Surgical Nursing