

Preventing Pneumonia

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. Sit in a chair when you eat all meals. The nursing staff can help 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 during your hospital stay and for 1 week after you are discharged.

Using the incentive spirometer

1. Close your lips tightly around the mouthpiece.
2. Breathe in slowly and deeply through your mouth. The indicator is on the right. Keep the indicator between the 2 arrows.
3. Hold your breath for 3 to 6 seconds to keep the disc at the highest level you can.
4. Release the mouthpiece and breathe out slowly.
5. Repeat 10 times every hour while awake. Try to reach the same level with each breath.
6. After 10 breaths, cough to clear mucus from your throat and chest.
7. Move the marker to the level you reached to show your goal next time. Once you can keep the disc at that level most of the time, try a higher level.

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.

If you have any questions, please ask your nurse.