



Recovering from a Serious Lung Infection

Respiratory infections, like COVID-19 or influenza, cause inflammation of your airways and your lungs. Infections may be mild or severe. For severe lung infections, the recovery time can be extensive. It is important to know what to watch for, when to seek additional help and how to maintain optimal lung health as your body recovers.

How long will I feel sick?

It is important to follow your doctors's instructions in order to help your body recover. How long you feel sick depends on how severe your lung infection is and other factors such as your age and health status.

I was hospitalized. What do I do if I feel worse again after I return home?

Follow your doctor's instructions on when to seek additional medical treatment. Signs and symptoms to watch for and report back include if your fever returns, you experience chest pain or worsening shortness of breath or if you develop any new symptoms that concern you.

What other steps can I take to feel better?

- Take your medication as prescribed by your doctor. The medicines your doctor prescribes may help with fever reduction, relaxing and opening the airways, reducing inflammation in the lungs or loosening the mucus in your lungs.
- Drink plenty of fluids to remain hydrated. Staying hydrated helps your body's defenses do their work. Light yellow urine indicates ideal hydration levels.
- If you smoke, now is the time to quit. We can help at [Lung.org/ffs](https://www.lung.org/ffs) or by calling 1-800-LUNGUSA.
- Get plenty of rest. Take naps during the day until you regain your energy. Your doctor may recommend you take time off work and limit other obligations to focus on getting well.
- Commit to prescribed treatment. If your doctor recommended physical or occupational therapy or cardiac or pulmonary rehabilitation, be sure to keep your appointments and complete the entire course.
- Keep your follow-up appointments. You may be feeling better now but it is still important to connect with your doctor to make a plan to reduce your risk of future lung infections.
- Be patient and remember, slow and steady wins the race. While you want to feel better right away, the important thing is to make slow and steady progress.

What can I do to prevent another lung infection?

- Get a flu shot every year.
- Follow social distancing recommendations in place in your area
- Wash your hands often.
- Talk to your doctor about getting the pneumonia vaccination.
- Stay away from people who are sick.

Lung HelpLine

One-on-One Support

Still have questions? Contact the Lung Association's Lung HelpLine at **1-800-LUNGUSA** to talk to a trained respiratory professional who can help answer your questions and connect you with additional support.