

Mycoplasma pneumoniae



Infectious Disease
Epidemiology &
Prevention Division

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What is *Mycoplasma pneumoniae*?

Mycoplasma pneumoniae (*M. pneumoniae*) infection is a mild respiratory illness caused by a bacteria called *Mycoplasma pneumoniae*.

What are the symptoms of *M. pneumoniae*?

Symptoms include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Bronchitis
- Sore throat
- Headache
- Fatigue

M. pneumoniae infection can cause pneumonia (sometimes called "walking pneumonia" because it is usually mild and rarely requires people to have to stay at the hospital). About 1 out of 3 sick persons with the infection develop pneumonia. Ear infections can result. Symptoms may last from a few days to more than a month. The infection may appear more like a cold in children younger than 5 years old.

How is *M. pneumoniae* spread?

M. pneumoniae bacteria are spread by droplets from the nose and throat of an infected person, especially when they cough or sneeze. Contact with unwashed hands and contaminated objects or surfaces can also spread the bacteria. Most people who are exposed for a short amount of time do not get sick. However, these bacteria can spread between people who live together or work in crowded settings.

How do I know if I have *M. pneumoniae*?

See your healthcare provider. Your health care provider will review your symptoms and may utilize laboratory testing for a confirmatory diagnosis.

Fast Facts

- Most *M. pneumoniae* infections are mild however some can cause pneumonia
- Good hand washing and respiratory etiquette are the best ways to prevent illness
- Contact your healthcare provider if you are experiencing difficulty breathing or any concerning symptoms

Who is at risk for getting *M. pneumoniae*?

People of all ages are at risk for infection, but it is more common in school-aged children and young adults. Outbreaks can occur in crowded environments like military barracks, college dorms, nursing homes and hospitals.

How is *M. pneumoniae* treated?

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.

How is *M. pneumoniae* prevented?

Good hand washing and respiratory hygiene (i.e., covering your coughs and sneezes) are the best ways to prevent infection because there is no vaccine for *M. pneumoniae*.



Cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, and throw away used tissues right away.



Frequently and thoroughly wash your hands.



Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.



Avoid close contact with those who are ill or experiencing respiratory symptoms. Do not share cups or utensils with someone who is sick.



Stay home if you are ill; children who are ill should not attend school or child care.

**Mycoplasma pneumoniae is not a reportable disease in Indiana, therefore data is not widely available. However, outbreaks are reportable to the Respiratory Team within the Infectious Disease Epidemiology and Prevention Division at 317-233-7125.*

For additional information on *M. pneumoniae*:

www.cdc.gov/mycoplasma

