

Pneumocystis jiroveci Pneumonia (PcP)

What is PcP?

A fungus that can cause lung infections in humans whose immune system is not working well.

Who gets PcP?

Anyone can get the fungus in their lungs; if your immune system is good or intact, it usually just hangs out in the lungs but does not make the person sick. There is no sex or race association. If the immune system is hurt, such as in people with low CD4 counts, the fungus can cause disease.

What does PcP do?

PcP is a fungus that causes pneumonias or lung infections. Usually it causes people to have slow worsening shortness of breath over several weeks. The infected person can also have low grade fevers. Usually the cough does not produce any sputum (phlegm) but it can cause production of clear or white sputum. Occasionally bacteria or viruses can also be causing infection in the same person which may cause green or yellow sputum or high fevers.

How do I get PcP?

It is thought that people pass the fungus to other people by coughing.

How can I find out if I have PcP?

Your healthcare worker can order a test called an induced sputum where you breathe in a mist that makes you cough really deeply. You may also have a lighted tube put down into your lungs, called a bronchoscopy, to wash out your lungs and look for the PcP.

How do I treat it?

The usual drug of choice for this infection is Bactrim (also called Septra, TMP/SMX, or trimethoprim/sulfamethoxazole). Occasionally you may be treated by pentamidine, dapsone, clindamycin, atovaquone, or primaquine.

Can I prevent this infection?

If your CD4 count is less than 200 or your CD4 % is less than 14%, you may need to take either TMP/SMX, dapsone, atovaquone, or pentamidine to prevent the infection. When your immune system gets better, you may be able to come off these medicines.

**If you have further questions, be sure to talk to your primary care provider
or your health educator or nurse.**



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