



**Royal Berkshire**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Hospital-acquired pneumonia (HAP)

Information for patients,  
relatives and carers

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## **This leaflet explains what hospital acquired pneumonia (HAP) is and how it can be prevented.**

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### **What is pneumonia?**

Pneumonia is **swelling (inflammation) of the tissue in one or both lungs due to infection**. There are groups of air pockets in your lungs and when you have pneumonia, these pockets become filled with fluid and inflammatory cells. Pneumonia is usually as a result of an infection caused by bacteria (germs). It can also be caused by a virus, such as Coronavirus (COVID-19).

### **What is hospital-acquired pneumonia or HAP?**

Pneumonia can be acquired in the community, in hospital or as a result of difficulty swallowing and by aspiration (breathing in food, saliva, liquids, or vomit). Pneumonia can develop in any patient admitted to hospital. We call pneumonia 'hospital-acquired pneumonia' or 'HAP' when it develops after at least 48 hours of being in hospital while being treated for another condition or having an operation. People in intensive care (ICU) on breathing machines are particularly at risk of developing ventilator-associated pneumonia. This leaflet refers specifically to hospital-acquired pneumonia – HAP.

### **What are the symptoms of HAP?**

The symptoms of pneumonia can develop suddenly over 24-48 hours, or they may come on more slowly over several days.

Common symptoms include:

- Dry cough or cough with coloured or bloodstained phlegm
- Shortness of breath
- Racing heartbeat
- Fever and shivering

- Loss of appetite
- Chest pain, worse when breathing in Confusion.

## What can I do to help prevent HAP?

- Good oral hygiene is very important in reducing the risk of HAP. We advise continuing to brush your teeth regularly throughout your stay in hospital, i.e. **twice a day**.



- Mobilising and spending less time in bed will also reduce the risk. When in hospital, try to get out of bed and sit in a chair as much as you can. If this is not possible, aim to have the back of the bed raised to **30-45** degrees during the daytime.



- Good hand hygiene also reduces the risk of HAP. Make sure you regularly wash your hands during your stay in hospital.



- Cigarette smoke and excess alcohol both affect your body's ability to fight infection. Stopping these will reduce the risk of developing future pneumonias.



- **Important:** A family member or carer will know the patient best. We encourage family members and carers to report to the ward staff if they feel the patient is not quite right or is not their 'normal self'.

## Further information

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pneumonia/>

To find out more about our Trust visit [www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk](http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk)

**Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.**

RBFT HAP Group

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