



What is pneumonia?

Pneumonia is an infection of the lungs, often bacterial in origin. It affects dogs more often than cats. Bacterial pneumonia often occurs in one of two ways:

1. Community acquired - this is when a patient gets pneumonia from an infection that is spread through the environment and is more common in puppies.
2. Aspiration pneumonia- this is the most common way that patients get pneumonia, which is from aspiration (breathing in) of gastric contents or liquids, resulting in subsequent infection.

What are signs of pneumonia?

The most common signs are trouble breathing or coughing. Additionally, many patients will be lethargic, weak, or have a decreased appetite. Patients that have aspirated may also have gastrointestinal signs like vomiting or regurgitation, which could be how they got pneumonia in the first place.

How do you diagnose pneumonia?

Chest X-rays are the best way to diagnose pneumonia, as well as monitor response to therapy. A tracheal wash is sometimes also recommended, especially if this is a recurrence of pneumonia for your pet. If aspiration pneumonia is suspected, your doctor may also recommend testing to try to determine what the underlying disease process that contributed to the aspiration was in the first place.

How do you treat pneumonia?

The mainstay of treatment is with antibiotics. Additionally, many patients are quite ill and require additional oxygen supplementation, anti-emetics (to combat nausea and vomiting), IV fluids, and nebulization. Most patients that are sick enough to require oxygen supplementation will need to be in the hospital for 4-6 days at least. Less severe cases can be treated with oral antibiotics and outpatient care.

What is the prognosis for patients with pneumonia?

Prognosis is variable based on the underlying cause and condition of your pet. Pneumonia can be fatal, and is often more likely to be so in elderly patients. Hopefully, with quick identification of the disease and prompt initiation of therapy, your pet will have the best chance at a full recovery.