

Does Pneumonia Require Antibiotics?

The answer may be “no”.

Expert guidelines encourage clinicians to rely on clinical signs and symptoms and to not rush to prescribe antibiotics in patients who lack clinical signs of pneumonia—regardless of the chest x-ray result.

Is it Pneumonia?

- A conclusive chest X-ray, AND
- At least two:
 - New or worsening cough
 - New or increased sputum
 - Fever
 - Pleuritic chest pain
 - New chest exam findings (rales, rhonchi, wheezing, bronchial breathing)
 - New/increased shortness of breath OR respiratory rate >25/min
 - Change in mental status
 - Vital sign instability

However, Chest X-rays...

- Can be difficult to get due to problems with positioning.
- The resulting X-ray may be hard to interpret conclusively.
- Ambiguous X-rays are not definitive for pneumonia.



Antibiotics should be reserved for patients with **clinical signs and symptoms** that are worrisome for **bacterial** pneumonia.