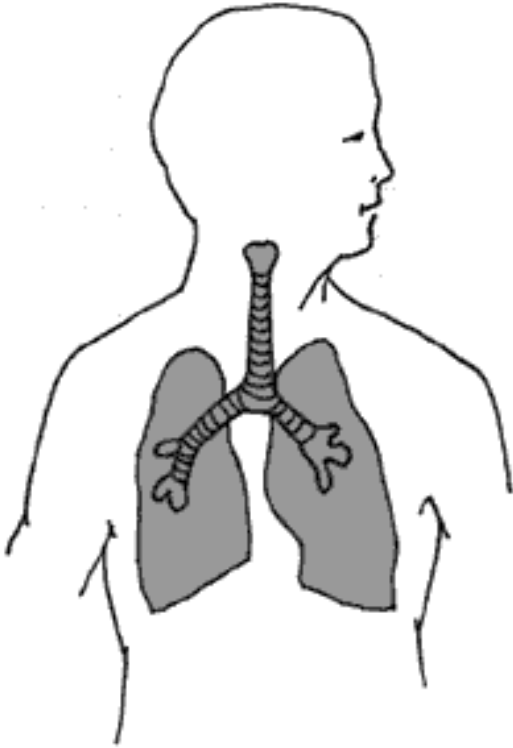


# The Lung Infection

# PCP

How to Help Yourself

## PCP: What You Can Do



Many people with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, get sick with a lung infection called PCP. This booklet explains what PCP is. It also talks about medicines that help prevent and treat PCP -- and what you can do to help yourself.

## What is PCP?

PCP is an infection that clogs the lungs, making it hard to breathe. PCP is short for *Pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia, the medical name for this infection. PCP can be severe, but today's medicines can help you fight the disease.

The cause of PCP is a germ that many people already have in their bodies. It is harmless -- unless you have HIV or some other disease that weakens the immune system. Without a strong immune system to protect you, the germ can cause a very serious lung infection.

Some or all of these signs may mean you have PCP.

## Symptoms of PCP

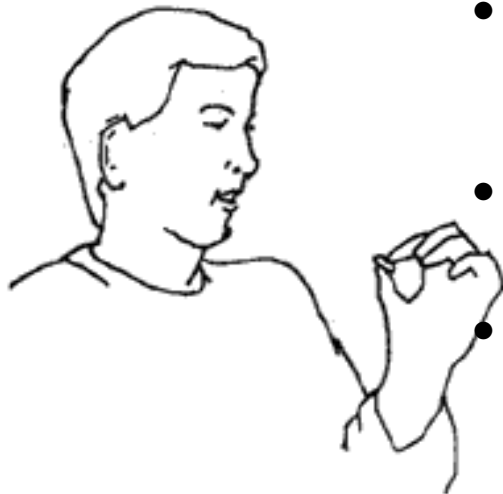
- Fever
- Fatigue
- Weight loss
- Dry cough
- Shortness of breath.



## Medicines Can Help

Research has found medicines that can help against PCP in several ways:

- **To keep your immune system stronger.** Some medicines can help the body fight disease for a longer time. To keep you healthy, your doctor may ask you to start taking medicine as soon as you find out you have HIV.



- **Prevent or delay PCP.** Many people who have not yet had PCP can take medicines to help prevent or delay it. You might begin taking the medicine when blood tests show that your immune system is getting weak.
- **To help you get over PCP.** If you have PCP, you will need to go to the hospital or doctor to be treated. The doctor might let you be treated at home by taking pills.
- **To keep PCP from coming back.** Once you have had PCP, you could get it again. Taking medicine regularly -- such as Bactrim® or Septra® -- may help PCP from coming back.

## How To Help Yourself

1. **Go to a clinic or doctor for regular check-ups. Tests can show if you are at risk for PCP. Then you can begin taking medicine right away to prevent it.**



2. **Tell your doctor or clinic if you notice any symptoms of PCP. These warning signs may mean that you need tests or medicines right away.**



3.



**Keep your immune system as strong as you can. This means eating healthy foods, getting enough rest and exercise, and staying away from alcohol, cigarettes, and**

drugs.  
It  
also  
may  
mean  
taking  
medicine  
even  
when  
you  
feel  
well.



4. **Follow your care plan if you get PCP. You will need to take your medicines at the right times, and in the right amounts. Be sure you know what to do, and stick with the routine. If you have questions, don't be afraid to ask the clinic staff or your doctor.**

5. **Report any new problems that occur while you are taking medicines for PCP. Your medicine may cause side effects, such as skin rash or fever. Sometimes changing the amount or kind of medicine can help.**

### **Remember:**

- **PCP is a very serious lung infection.**
- **If you have a cough that does not go away, fever, or trouble breathing, call your doctor or clinic.**
- **Talk to your doctor or clinic nurse about medicine to prevent or delay PCP.**



Research: Hope for the Future

Scientists have made progress against PCP, but they are still looking for better ways to prevent and treat PCP.

Today, many new drugs are being tested. You may be able to take part in one of these tests. If a new drug works, you may help yourself and others with HIV.

If you are interested, talk to your doctor or clinic. Or call the numbers below page to find out more.



## To Find Out More About PCP

Here are some numbers to call to learn more about PCP and how to help yourself.

- **1-800-342-AIDS**  
(1-800-342-2437)

You can get more details about PCP and how it affects people with HIV. You can also find out about treatment centers and other help.

- **1-800-TRIALS-A**  
(1-800-874-2572)

You can find out about testing new drugs for PCP -- which drugs are being tested, where the studies are taking place, and who is doing the research.

- **1-800-AIDS-NIH**  
(1-800-243-7644)

Call Monday through Friday from 12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. (Eastern Time) to find out about studies being done at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Clinical Center.