

Mycoplasma pneumoniae

What is *Mycoplasma pneumoniae*?

Mycoplasma pneumoniae is a bacteria that can cause several kinds of illnesses, most common of which is an illness of the lungs.

What are the usual symptoms of mycoplasma infection?

Usually, mycoplasma infection is a mild illness characterized by fever, cough, bronchitis, sore throat, and headache. Mycoplasma infection may cause a mild form of pneumonia, which is sometimes called “walking pneumonia”. In *very rare* cases, mycoplasma can cause serious illness such as encephalitis (an inflammation of the brain) or meningitis (inflammation of the lining of the brain and spinal cord).

How does someone get mycoplasma infection?

Mycoplasma pneumoniae is spread from person to person from respiratory droplets, such as when someone coughs or sneezes. Someone can also touch something that has the bacteria on it, such as a door handle, and then touch their eye, nose or mouth and be infected.

Who is at risk for mycoplasma infection?

Each year an estimated 2 millions cases with 100,000 pneumonia-related hospitalizations occur in the United States due to *Mycoplasma pneumoniae*. People of all ages are at risk for mycoplasma infection but children under age 5 rarely become ill. Mycoplasma infection is

the leading cause of pneumonia in school-age children and young adults

What is the incubation period for mycoplasma infection?

From the time someone is infected with the bacteria until they become ill can range from 1 to 4 weeks.

Is mycoplasma infection reportable?

Mycoplasma infection is not a reportable disease in New Hampshire and there is currently no national surveillance system in place.

How is mycoplasma infection diagnosed?

Diagnosis of acute infections is difficult. Mycoplasma infection is usually diagnosed on the basis of typical symptoms. There is a blood test that can be helpful toward diagnosis, but is not always accurate. More specific laboratory tests are sometimes used in special outbreak investigations.

How long is someone infectious after they become infected?

The contagious period is about 10 days.

Does past infection with *Mycoplasma pneumoniae* make a person immune?

Immunity after mycoplasma infection does occur. However, a person can get mycoplasma more than once (generally milder than the first episode). The duration of immunity is unknown.

What is the treatment for mycoplasma infection?

Antibiotics can treat mycoplasma infection. However, because mycoplasma infection usually resolves on its own, antibiotic treatment of mild symptoms is usually not necessary.

Is there a way to prevent mycoplasma infection?

There are no vaccines against mycoplasma infection. Similar to prevention methods for many respiratory infections, everyone should

- 1) cover their mouth and nose with a tissue or their arm when coughing or sneezing, then throw away the tissue and wash their hands;
- 2) stay home from work or school if they are ill; and
- 3) not share utensils, cups, or toothbrushes.

What do I do if I think I might have mycoplasma infection?

Call your health care provider.

For specific concerns about mycoplasma infection, call the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, Communicable Disease Control Section at 603-271-4496 or 800-852-3345 x4496. For further information, refer to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov.