India has improved its global action plan for prevention and control of pneumonia

Pneumonia can be mild to life threatening and preventive action is a must

New Delhi, 01 November 2017: As per recent statistics, India is responsible for 20% of all pneumonia deaths, which is nearly 3.5 lakh. Of all the states, Uttar Pradesh tops the list in terms of these deaths. However, reports also indicate that India is among the 12 nations that have improved their Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Pneumonia and Diarrhoea (GAPPD) score this year. The health ministry recently announced a partial introduction of the vaccine in five states including Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, and Himachal Pradesh.

Pneumonia is a form of acute respiratory infection affecting the lungs. In a healthy person, the small sacs called alveoli in the lungs fill with air while breathing. However, in pneumonia, these get filled with pus and fluid, making breathing painful and limiting oxygen intake. Pneumonia can be caused by viruses, bacteria, and fungi.

Speaking about this, Padma Shri Awardee Dr K K Aggarwal, National President Indian Medical Association (IMA) and President Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI) and Dr RN Tandon – Honorary Secretary General IMA in a joint statement, said, “Pneumonia can range in seriousness from mild to life-threatening. It is most serious for infants and young children, people older than age 65, and people with health problems or weakened immune systems. Many germs can cause pneumonia. The most common are bacteria and viruses in the air we breathe. The body usually prevents these germs from infecting your lungs. However, sometimes these can overpower the immune system, even if a person’s general health is good. The most common type is community-acquired pneumonia which occurs outside of hospitals or other health care facilities. The other forms of pneumonia are hospital-acquired pneumonia, healthcare acquired pneumonia, and aspiration pneumonia.”

The signs and symptoms of this condition include chest pain while breathing or coughing; confusion or changes in mental awareness (in adults age 65 and older); cough, which may produce phlegm; fatigue; fever, sweating, and shaking chills; lower than normal body temperature; nausea, vomiting or diarrhea; and shortness of breath.
Adding further, Dr Aggarwal, said, “While most cases of pneumonia can be treated at home, babies, children, and people with severe pneumonia may need to be admitted to hospital for treatment. Pneumonia is usually treated with antibiotics, even if viral pneumonia is suspected as there may be a degree of bacterial infection as well. The type of antibiotic used and the way it is given will be determined by the severity and cause of the pneumonia.”

The following tips can help prevent pneumonia.

- Get vaccinated. There are vaccines that can prevent some types of pneumonia and the flu. The vaccination guidelines have changed over time and should be reviewed with the doctor even if one has received a pneumonia vaccine earlier.
- Ensure that children get vaccinated. Doctors recommend a different pneumonia vaccine for children younger than age 2 and for children ages 2 to 5 years who are at particular risk of pneumococcal disease.
- Practice good hygiene to protect yourself against respiratory infections that may lead to pneumonia. Wash your hands regularly or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Don’t smoke as it can damage the natural defense of the lungs against respiratory infections.
- Keep the immune system strong by getting enough sleep, exercising regularly, and eating a healthy diet.

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About IMA: Indian Medical Association is the only representative, national voluntary organization of Doctors of Modern Scientific System of Medicine, which looks after the interest of doctors as well as the well being of the community at large. It has its Headquarter in Delhi and State / Terr. Branches in 30 States and Union Territories. It has over 2, 60,000 doctors as its members through more than 1765 active local branches spread across the country.

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