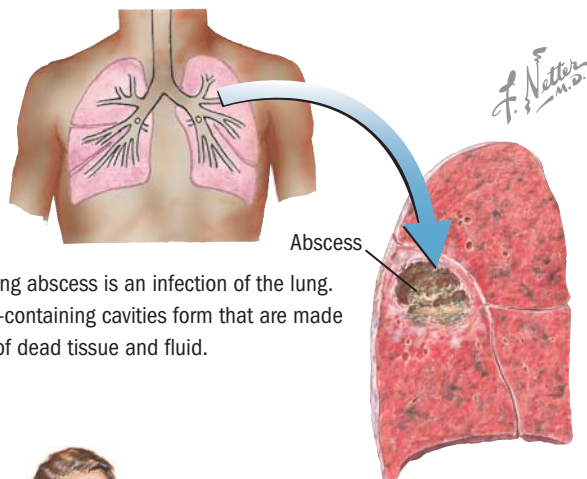


MANAGING YOUR LUNG ABSCESS



A lung abscess is an infection of the lung. Pus-containing cavities form that are made up of dead tissue and fluid.



Aspiration is the most common reason for formation of lung abscesses. Aspiration means that foreign material (such as food, drink, vomit, or secretions from the mouth) is breathed into lungs.



Symptoms include fever, chills, sweats, cough, tiredness, weakness, loss of appetite, weight loss, and chest pain made worse by coughing or taking deep breaths.



X-ray



Bronchoscopy

Your doctor makes a diagnosis from symptoms, chest x-rays, and CT. Sputum and blood cultures may help confirm the cause. Your doctor may order bronchoscopy to rule out lung cancer if you have signs and symptoms of recurrent obstruction.

What Is a Lung Abscess?

Lung abscess is an infection of the lung. Pus-containing cavities form that are made up of bacteria or other microorganisms, dead (necrotic) tissue, and fluid. People over age 60 have a greater risk of getting abscesses.

What Causes a Lung Abscess?

Aspiration is the most important reason for formation of lung abscesses. Aspiration means that foreign material (usually food, drink, vomit, or secretions from the mouth) is breathed into the lungs. Inflammation, pneumonia, and abscess formation can occur in 7 to 14 days. Stroke, seizure disorders, drug abuse, alcoholism, poor oral hygiene (gum disease), emphysema, lung cancer, and disorders of the esophagus (swallowing problems) can lead to aspiration.

Bacteria causing lung abscesses are usually anaerobes (don't need oxygen to grow) and originate from the mouth. Other microorganisms, such as parasites and fungi, can also infect lungs and cause abscesses.

What Are the Symptoms of a Lung Abscess?

Symptoms usually develop during weeks to months. Symptoms include fever, chills, sweats, and a cough with foul-smelling and bad-tasting sputum. People are often tired, are weak, lose their appetite, and lose weight. Sometimes, blood in the sputum and chest pain made worse by coughing or taking deep breaths occur. People may have rapid heart rate, rapid breathing, wheezing, and fluid in the lungs (pleural effusion).

How Is a Lung Abscess Diagnosed?

The doctor makes a diagnosis from symptoms and chest x-rays. The doctor may order computed tomography (CT) of the chest to see the abscess. Sputum and blood cultures may help confirm the bacteria or microorganism causing the abscess. The doctor may order bronchoscopy to rule out lung cancer if there are signs that something may be obstructing the airways. In this test, a lighted tube is passed through the mouth into the lungs to see in the lungs and get samples of lung tissue.

MANAGING YOUR LUNG ABSCESS



Most people usually need intravenous and oral antibiotics, given for 4 to 6 weeks. Finish all your antibiotics as prescribed by your doctor.



Tell your doctor about symptoms of relapse, such as chest pain, fever, or coughing up blood, or problems with medicines. Report pain with swallowing or food getting stuck when you swallow.

Don't smoke. Smoking can lead to lung abscess, emphysema, and lung cancer.



Don't drink alcohol in excess. Lung abscesses are common in alcoholics, who have greater chances of aspiration.

How Is a Lung Abscess Treated?

First, the microorganism causing the abscess is treated. Second, the condition leading to aspiration (e.g., seizures, alcoholism, poor oral hygiene, or stroke) is treated.

Most people usually need intravenous and oral antibiotics, given for 4 to 6 weeks. Up to 95% of people are cured, but the cure will depend on the infection's cause.

DOs and DON'Ts in Managing a Lung Abscess:

- ✓ **DO** finish all your antibiotics as prescribed by your doctor.
- ✓ **DO** tell your doctor about symptoms of relapse, such as chest pain, fever, or coughing up blood, or problems with medicines (e.g., rash, diarrhea, tongue swelling, wheezing, or shortness of breath).
- ✓ **DO** report pain with swallowing or food getting stuck when you swallow.
- ✓ **DO** call your doctor if you have a drinking or drug problem.
- ✓ **DO** call your doctor if you have a seizure.
- ✓ **DO** call your doctor if your fever lasts for more than 7 days after starting antibiotics.
- ⊗ **DON'T** stop your antibiotics unless your doctor tells you to.
- ⊗ **DON'T** smoke. Smoking can lead to lung abscess, emphysema, and lung cancer.
- ⊗ **DON'T** use recreational drugs.
- ⊗ **DON'T** abuse sleeping pills, anxiety pills, and opiate narcotics. They can lead to aspiration.
- ⊗ **DON'T** drink alcohol in excess. Lung abscesses are common in alcoholics, who have greater chances of aspiration.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the following source:

- American Lung Association
Tel: (212) 315-8700, (800) 586-4872
Website: <http://www.lungusa.org>