

# Mycoplasma Infection



## What is Mycoplasma Infection?

Mycoplasma infection typically refers to the respiratory illness caused by *Mycoplasma Pneumoniae*, a microscopic organism related to bacteria. Most infections involve the upper respiratory tract (e.g. sore throat, bronchitis). The infection can progress to pneumonia in 5-10% of patients. It is also commonly referred to as “Walking Pneumonia” as the symptoms are usually mild, and most patients can function normally. Hospitalization is rarely required. Complications are relatively rare.

## Who gets Mycoplasma Infection?

Anyone can get the illness, but it most often affects older children and young adults. Children under five years usually have mild or no symptoms. It is uncommon in the first year of life.

## What are the symptoms?

Symptoms usually develop around 2-3 weeks after exposure to the organism. The symptoms develop slowly over 2-4 days. Typical initial symptoms include fever, sore throat, tiredness, body aches, headaches and dizzy spells. A dry cough, often in spasms, is the hallmark of the infection. Early stages of the infection can be very similar to that of the common cold or even influenza.

However, with Mycoplasma infection, the symptoms can be persistent, especially the cough and tiredness, which can linger for weeks and sometimes months



# FAQs

## Who gets Mycoplasma Infection?

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## How is Mycoplasma spread?

Like the cold and flu, the illness is spread through contact with droplets from the nose and throat of infected people, especially when they cough and sneeze. Transmission is thought to require prolonged, close contact with an infected person, which explains outbreaks in schools, institutions and families.

## How is Mycoplasma infection diagnosed?

Most cases are usually diagnosed by clinical history based on typical symptoms. A blood test might sometimes be helpful in the diagnosis but is not always positive. A PCR oral swab is more accurate and can also be done in the clinic. The test is best done one week after the onset of symptoms. A chest X-ray will be helpful if pneumonia is suspected.

## Does past infection with Mycoplasma make a person immune?

Immunity after Mycoplasma infection does occur, but it is not life-long. Second infections can occur but may be milder. The duration of immunity is unknown.

## What is the treatment?

Antibiotics such as clarithromycin, azithromycin or doxycycline and moxifloxacin are effective treatments. However, as Mycoplasma infections are self-limiting, antibiotic treatment of mild symptoms is not always necessary.

## What are the preventative measures?

As with any respiratory illness, good hand hygiene is essential. One should cover the mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing, use tissues whenever possible and throw the tissues away after use. Washing hands after doing these actions and avoiding crowded spaces and close contact with others would also be ideal.

