

BEHAVIOUR 1: IF YOUR CHILD HAS A COUGH OR DIFFICULT AND FAST BREATHING, BRING THEM TO THE HEALTH CENTRE IMMEDIATELY

Behaviour to promote

If your child has a cough and rapid breathing or difficult breathing, they may be suffering from pneumonia, a severe lung disease. Bring the child to a health centre for treatment immediately as the disease can be fatal.

Reasons

Pneumonia is an Acute Respiratory Infection (ARI) that affects the lungs. It is caused by germs (viruses, bacteria, parasites). Pneumonia can be spread through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes in close proximity to other people, or by contact. When a child has pneumonia, their lungs fill with fluid and pus which makes breathing hard and fast because the inhalation of oxygen is limited.

According to the DHS survey in Burkina Faso (2010), 6% of children under 5 years had a cough with rapid or difficult breathing. 64% were brought to the health centre.

Barriers to behaviour change

Many children die of pneumonia at home because their parents do not understand the seriousness of this disease and do not know that it requires immediate professional medical help.

Many people do not recognize the signs of pneumonia. They often confuse the symptoms of pneumonia with various forms of cough,¹ and also with those of other diseases such as malaria and meningitis. It is necessary to emphasize the importance of recognizing the key signs of pneumonia: fast or difficult breathing.

Many people will first self-medicate. They use traditional herbal "tisanes" or various concoctions. Only after the failure of various attempts at home or when the child develops more serious symptoms, such as fever, loss of appetite or sleep, will they make use of the skilled care available at the health centre.

Factors contributing to behaviour change

Some mothers know the signs of pneumonia because their children have already suffered from the disease. So, as soon as they suspect pneumonia, they do not wait and will quickly consult a health worker.

¹ These different kinds of coughs are "lew-lew kons" (whooping cough); cough associated with malaria; cough due to "kotiguè"; coughs due to colds (méog-konsgo); "Kons-kudgo" (tuberculosis); "Kons-ziim" (cough due to absorption of blood from the mother to the child during birth and is described as being very difficult to treat); "Kons-widga" (cough which scrapes the heart and gives tingling sensations).

BEHAVIOUR 2: FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS ON DOSAGE AND DURATION OF MEDICAL TREATMENT

Behaviour to promote

If a health worker prescribes antibiotics to treat pneumonia, follow the instructions properly and give the full recommended dose to the child, following the full course of treatment even if the child seems better.

Reasons

There is no statistical information on how many people follow the correct dosage of treatment, but according to the results of qualitative research, it is particularly problematic for the treatment of pneumonia.

Treatment for pneumonia lasts at least seven days and for the child to recover, it is important to properly follow the dosage and duration instructions. If the treatment path is not followed correctly, this could increase antibiotic resistance.

Barriers to behaviour change

The prescription (number of pills/duration) is not always followed correctly. Reasons for stopping a prescription: people think they can save money and/or they become complacent when they find that their child's health begins to improve after a few days of treatment.

The recommended treatment is non-subsidized (costing 700-800 CFA).

Factors contributing to behaviour change

Sometimes, people follow the dosage and duration instructions. There are several reasons for this behaviour: control of the treatment is retained by the health worker (the mother must return for a check in 1-2 days, 3-4 days after the beginning of treatment, to be determined by the severity of the disease), the husbands watching over the women in cases of child sickness; and/or women returning to the health centre for fear they have not understood the instructions of the health worker.

The recommended treatment is usually available in pharmacies (Generic Essential Drugs).