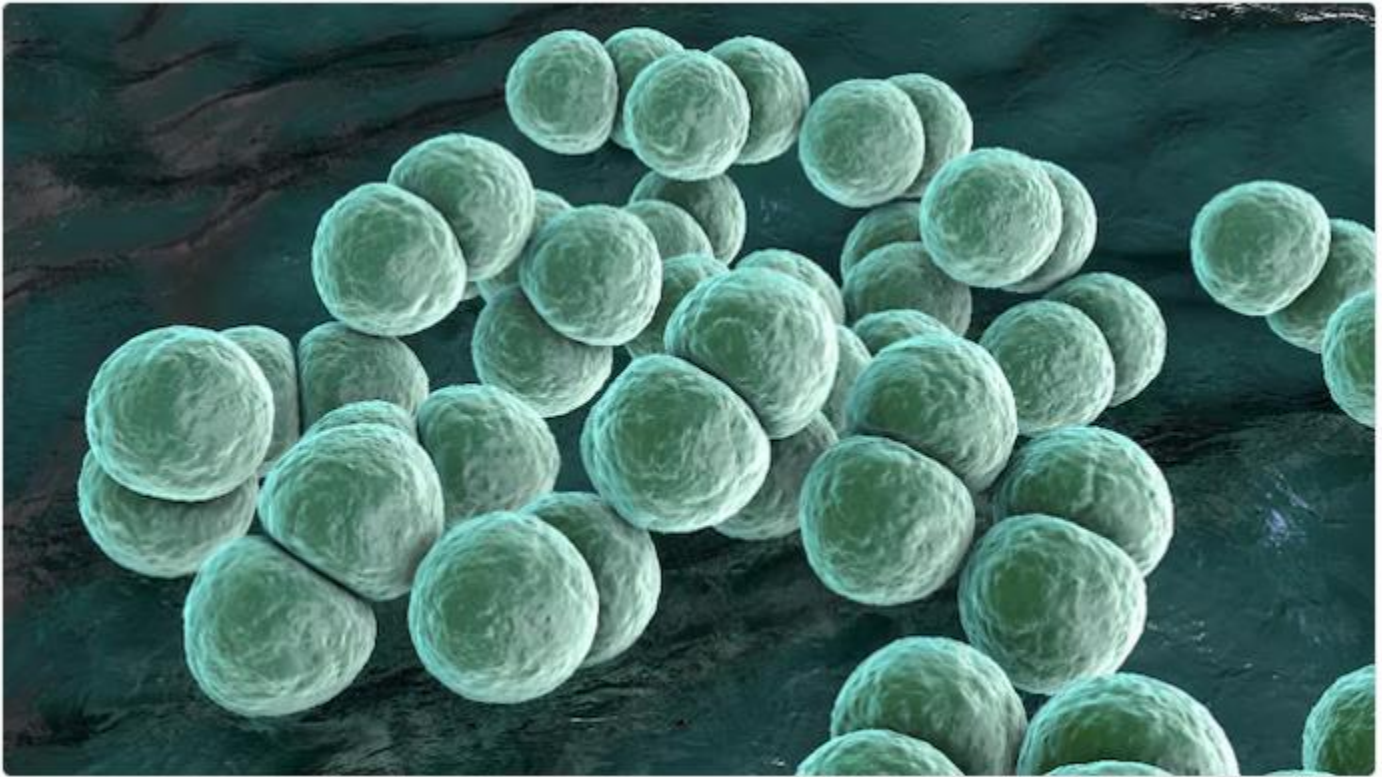


What is walking pneumonia, the lung disease often mistaken for a common cold?

Walking pneumonia is a mild lung infection resembling a cold but lingering longer.



*Walking pneumonia is most commonly caused by the bacteria *Mycoplasma pneumoniae*. (Photo: Getty Images)*

In recent weeks, doctors have reported cases of "walking pneumonia," a mild yet persistent lung infection that can mimic symptoms of a common cold.

Unlike typical pneumonia, which can lead to severe lung inflammation and difficulty breathing, walking pneumonia is often less intense, allowing people to carry on with their daily activities, which is how it earned its name in the 1930s.

It is also called 'silent' pneumonia because sometimes people don't experience symptoms despite X-rays showing fluid-filled air sacs in the lungs, according to Dr Vikas Mittal, Pulmonologist, Director, Department of Respiratory Medicine, CK Birla Hospital, Punjabi Bagh.

Dr Neetu Jain, pulmonologist at PSRI Hospital, New Delhi, told IndiaToday.in that such patients may have 'silent hypoxia' in which they do not show or have symptoms, but low oxygen is seen on the pulse oximeter.

WHAT IS WALKING PNEUMONIA?

Walking pneumonia is a type of atypical pneumonia most commonly caused by the bacteria *Mycoplasma pneumoniae*. It often presents symptoms similar to those of a common cold or mild respiratory infection, including cough, sore throat, low-grade fever, and fatigue.

While it may not cause severe illness, it can still be disruptive, with symptoms lingering for weeks if left untreated.

Though walking pneumonia is typically not as contagious as the flu or a viral cold, it can still spread through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

This increases the likelihood of transmission in crowded places such as schools, offices, and public transport, factors that may be contributing to the rising cases seen in clinics and hospitals across India.

The reason for the sudden increase in walking pneumonia cases remains unclear, but health experts suggest it could be due to a mix of seasonal changes, rising pollution levels, and a weak immune system.

TREATMENT AND PREVENTION

Walking pneumonia is often manageable with rest, fluids, and, in some cases, antibiotics. However, due to its mild nature, people may not seek medical treatment immediately, which can prolong symptoms and potentially worsen the condition.

Doctors recommend seeking medical advice if symptoms like cough and fatigue persist beyond a week.

While walking pneumonia may not be as alarming as more severe respiratory infections, it's important for people experiencing prolonged cold-like symptoms to consult a doctor.

News Source:

<https://www.indiatoday.in/health/story/what-is-walking-pneumonia-the-lung-disease-often-mistaken-for-a-common-cold-2632657-2024-11-13>