

## World Pneumonia Day is November 12, 2017

### Stop Pneumonia: Strengthen Strategies to Protect, Prevent and Treat

**New York, NY, Nov. 10, 2017** - In support of World Pneumonia Day, Nov. 12, the Forum of International Respiratory Societies (FIRS), of which [the American Thoracic Society](#) is a founding member, calls for global efforts to:

- **Raise awareness** about pneumonia, the world's leading infectious killer of children under the age of five years;
- Promote interventions to **protect against, prevent, and treat** pneumonia for all people worldwide;
- **Generate action**, including continued investment and research to combat pneumonia.

**Pneumonia is preventable and treatable**, yet it causes 2.8 million deaths a year and remains the main cause of death in children under 5 years outside the neonatal period and a relevant cause of death in the elderly. Most deaths occur in low and middle-income countries. Pneumonia is also a major cause of hospitalisation, of health care use, and of absenteeism from work. Pneumonia early in a child's life can also lead to chronic lung disease in children and adults.

These are effective ways to **protect, prevent and treat** pneumonia:

- **Protect** children from pneumonia by exclusive breastfeeding and by providing good nutrition and adequate complementary feeding;
- **Prevent** pneumonia using vaccinations, preventing HIV and treating HIV-infected people with antiretroviral therapy; using cotrimoxazole prophylaxis for HIV-infected and exposed children; reducing household air pollution and smoking, especially during pregnancy and at home;
- **Treat** pneumonia by ensuring access to appropriate care and availability of antibiotics, early identification of hypoxemia with pulse oximeters and providing supplementary oxygen if needed.

Pneumonia is commonly caused by bacteria or viruses, often existing together. Vaccination is highly effective for preventing some of these infections. Vaccines against whooping cough (pertussis), measles and diphtheria, given in the childhood immunisation schedule, and influenza vaccine given to those who are predisposed to severe pneumonia and to the elderly are important to prevent pneumonia. New, effective vaccines are available against common bacteria causing pneumonia such as *H*

*influenzae b* and pneumococcus, but there are several areas of the world where these vaccines are unavailable. Vaccination of children to protect against pneumococcus is also a very effective way to prevent pneumonia in adults, as children frequently spread the infection to adults.

Every child, regardless of where they are born, deserves access to clean air and water, lifesaving vaccines, appropriate use of antibiotics and oxygen therapy to protect, prevent and treat pneumonia.

**FIRS calls on governments, health care providers, funders and public health specialists to ensure:**

- Better access to life saving vaccines for all children and adults;
- Universal access to health care systems and effective treatment, particularly oxygen and antibiotics, according to standard guidelines;
- Initiatives to reduce tobacco smoking and indoor air pollution
- Access to safe drinking water and sanitation;
- Strong prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission programs and use of antiretroviral therapy to reduce HIV-associated pneumonia;
- Increased funding to develop better ways to diagnose, treat and prevent pneumonia.

**About the American Thoracic Society**

Founded in 1905, the American Thoracic Society is the world's leading medical association dedicated to advancing pulmonary, critical care and sleep medicine. The Society's 15,000 members prevent and fight respiratory disease around the globe through research, education, patient care and advocacy. The ATS publishes three journals, the [American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine](#), the [American Journal of Respiratory Cell and Molecular Biology](#) and the [Annals of the American Thoracic Society](#).

**About the Forum of International Respiratory Societies**

[The Forum of International Respiratory Societies](#) (FIRS) is an organisation comprised of the world's leading international respiratory societies working together to improve lung health globally: [American Thoracic Society](#), [American College of Chest Physicians](#), [Asociación Latinoamericana De Tórax](#), [Asian Pacific Society of Respirology](#), [European Respiratory Society](#), [International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease](#), and the [Pan African Thoracic Society](#). The goal of FIRS is to unify and enhance efforts to improve lung health through the combined work of its more than 70,000 members globally.