

Ventilator-Associated Pneumonia (VAP)

What is ventilator-associated pneumonia (VAP)?

Pneumonia is an infection of the lungs. A **ventilator** is a machine that helps a person breathe by giving them oxygen through a tube. The tube can be placed in a person's mouth, nose, or through a hole in the front of the neck.

Ventilator-associated pneumonia, or VAP, is a lung infection or pneumonia that develops in a person who is on a ventilator.

Why do people need a ventilator?

A person may need a ventilator when they are very ill or during and after surgery. Ventilators can be lifesaving, but they can also increase a person's risk of getting pneumonia by making it easier for germs to get into the lungs.

Is it possible to treat VAP?

VAP can be a very serious infection. Most of the time, these infections can be treated with antibiotics. The choice of antibiotics depends on which specific germs are causing the infection. If you have VAP, your healthcare provider will decide which antibiotic is best for you. **If you have questions, please ask your doctor or nurse.**

What are some of the things Michigan Medicine does to prevent VAP?

To prevent VAP, our doctors, nurses, and other healthcare providers do the following:

- **Keep the head of your bed raised** between 30 and 45 degrees (unless you have other medical conditions that prevent this).



- **Check your ability to breathe on your own** every day, so we can take you off the ventilator as soon as possible.
- **Clean our hands** with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer before and after touching you or the ventilator.
- **Clean the inside of your mouth** regularly.
- Clean or replace equipment between uses on different patients.

If you do not see your providers clean their hands, please ask them to do so.

What can I do to help prevent VAP?

If you smoke, quit. People who smoke get more infections. If you are going to have surgery and you will need to be on a ventilator, talk with your doctor before your surgery about how you can quit smoking.

How can my family and friends help while I am on a ventilator?

Friends and family members can:

- Ask about raising the head of your bed.
- Ask when you will be allowed to try breathing on your own.
- Ask doctors, nurses, and other healthcare providers to clean their hands.
- Ask about how often healthcare providers clean your mouth.

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