

# BRANCATI CENTER BULLETIN



## WHAT IS WALKING PNEUMONIA?

### HOT TOPICS

There has been an uptick in cases of “Walking Pneumonia” recently. It is a common name to describe a lung infection caused by a bacteria called *mycoplasma pneumoniae*. The symptoms are typically milder than other pneumonia illnesses, therefore, infected individuals may leave their homes while sick, hence the term “walking pneumonia.”

Mycoplasma infections peaked in August 2024 and remain high. They seem to be affecting younger children in particular, compared to historic trends when the infection rates were higher among school-aged children and adolescents. This infection can affect individuals of any age. Usual symptoms of mycoplasma pneumonia include fever, headache and gradual lingering cough. It can, however, lead to new or worsening asthma, severe pneumonia and inflammation in the brain (known as encephalitis). It is important to be aware of this infection and seek medical attention when you or someone you know has suggestive symptoms. It must be treated with an antibiotic to relieve symptoms and prevent complications.

Practicing hand hygiene and avoiding close contact with people who are symptomatic can help prevent spread of this infection.

You can learn more about mycoplasma pneumonia by visiting the [CDC's website](https://www.cdc.gov/pneumonia).

Baltimore

## DEAR NEIGHBORS,

Winter is definitely making an entrance early this year! In this issue of the Bulletin we discuss the importance of hand hygiene, as well as walking pneumonia as cases have been on the rise. Our spotlight takes on the topic of Cannabis (also known as marijuana): how it may be used and the impact on our health.

We thank our readers for being proactive about health and wish you a joyous holiday season. We look forward to connecting again in 2025!

–The Brancati Center Team

## HAND HYGIENE

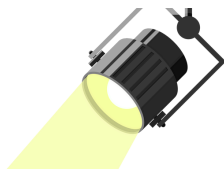
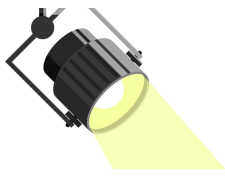
Given the time of year, with colds, influenza, COVID-19, and pneumonia illnesses more widespread, we wanted to provide a refresher on hand hygiene to help prevent the spread of infections.

Key tips to remember:

1. Clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer or soap and water after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. Also remember to clean your hands after touching doorknobs and other high contact surfaces in public places.
2. When washing your hands with water and soap: wet your hands first, from a lather with soap, scrub for 20 seconds, rinse and dry.
3. When cleaning your hands with hand sanitizer, apply a palmful of sanitizer to cover all surfaces of your hands, rub your hands together until the liquid is completely absorbed and your hands are dry.

If you are in contact with someone who has diarrhea symptoms, hand washing with soap and water (instead of hand sanitizer) is the most effective way to prevent the spread of germs.





# Spotlight:

## Cannabis (also known as Marijuana)

### What is Cannabis?

Cannabis refers to the dried flowers, stems, and seeds of the cannabis plant, which contains over 100 chemical compounds. The two most well-known compounds are tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD). THC is psychoactive, meaning it can alter mental state and produce a “high,” while CBD is non-psychoactive and does not cause a “high.”

### How Cannabis is Used

#### 1. Recreational Use

- THC-containing cannabis is commonly smoked in joints (rolled cigarettes), blunts (cigars), or bongs (water pipes). It can also be consumed using electronic vape pens or infused into edibles such as brownies, cakes, tea, sodas, or alcohol.
- Concentrated THC oils extracted from cannabis are often inhaled through dabbing or vaping.

#### 2. Medicinal Use

- Epilepsy: The FDA has approved a cannabis-based drug (Epidiolex) for treating rare seizure disorders.
- Nausea and Appetite: Synthetic THC-based medications are FDA-approved for managing nausea in chemotherapy patients and boosting appetite in individuals with conditions like AIDS or cancer-related weight loss.
- These treatments are available only by prescription from licensed healthcare providers, and no other cannabis uses are currently FDA-approved.

### Factors Influencing Cannabis Effects

The impact of cannabis varies depending on:

- THC Concentration: Higher THC levels increase the risk of side effects.
- Frequency of Use: Regular use may lead to greater risks.
- Combination with Other Substances: Mixing cannabis with alcohol or drugs can amplify negative effects.
- Method of Consumption: High-THC products like dabs or vapes may pose a greater risk of overdose or harmful additives.

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- Biological Sex: Women may be more prone to dizziness after use.
- Age: Adolescents, young children, and fetuses exposed to THC are at higher risk for developmental issues, including impaired attention, memory, and problem-solving skills.

### Health Risks of Cannabis Use

- Brain Health:
  - Short-term effects include impaired memory, slower reaction times, and difficulty with decision-making.
  - Long-term use during adolescence can hinder brain development and lead to lasting cognitive deficits.
- Mental Health: Regular use has been linked to conditions like social anxiety, depression, and, in some cases, schizophrenia.
- Lung Health: Smoking or inhaling cannabis may cause lung inflammation and scarring.
- Heart Health: Cannabis can temporarily increase heart rate and blood pressure, which may raise the risk of stroke or heart disease in susceptible individuals.
- Poisoning: High doses of THC, especially in young children, can lead to severe nausea, vomiting, and even intestinal blockages.

As research on cannabis continues to grow, it’s important to understand both its potential benefits and risks. Educating yourself and your loved ones can help in making informed decisions about its use.

Learn more about cannabis and its effects from the CDC: [CDC Cannabis Information](#).

## The Sydney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center Education Sessions

Join the Webinar:

REGISTER  
HERE:

What You  
Need to Know  
About Mental Health  
and Cancer

January 8, 2025  
6:00 pm

