



## **What is pneumococcal disease?**

Pneumococcal disease is caused by bacteria that can infect the lungs, the blood, and the membrane that covers the brain. The disease is most likely to strike in the winter and spring, but there are cases year round. The most common symptoms are chills, fever, chest pain, shortness of breath, and a severe cough. Some people vomit or have seizures. Pneumococcal disease kills thousands of older people in the United States each year.

## **How is pneumococcal disease spread?**

The germ is spread through contact with people who are ill with pneumococcal disease or who carry the germ in their throat. The germs that cause the disease can live in the nose and throat of many healthy children and adults without causing disease.

## **Who gets pneumococcal disease?**

Anyone can get pneumococcal disease. Those at highest risk are very young children, people 65 years and older, people of any age who have certain chronic medical problems, and people with weakened immune systems.

## **Is pneumococcal disease dangerous?**

Yes, it can be. Every year thousands of people need hospital treatment and up to 15,000 people die because of pneumococcal disease. Pneumococcal infection is the cause of more than one third of pneumonia in adults. It is also the leading cause of pneumonia, blood infection and ear infection in children.

## **How is pneumococcal disease treated?**

Pneumococcal disease is treated with antibiotics. In some areas, pneumococcal infections are resistant to some antibiotics, making treatment more difficult. People with severe cases may need to be hospitalized.

## **Can pneumococcal disease be prevented?**

Yes, there are two vaccines to prevent it. Pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine (PPV) protects against the 23 pneumococcal types most likely to cause disease in older children and adults, but is only approved for people 2 years of age and older. Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV), protects against the seven types of the pneumococcal bacteria most likely to cause infection in young children, and is approved for infants and children younger than 5 years of age.

## **Who should get a pneumococcal vaccine (PPV)?**

Everyone 65 years of age and older, people who live in a long-term care facility, and people 2-64 years of age with chronic health conditions or a weakened immune system. Adults should review their need for vaccination at every visit with their health care provider, especially at 50 and 65 years of age.

If the first dose of PPV is given at 65 years of age or older, a second dose is not needed. If the first dose is given at 64 years of age or younger, a second dose is needed 5 years after the first dose.

## **Who should get a pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV)?**

All children age 2-23 months. It is also recommended for certain children age 24-59 months with a chronic health condition or a weakened immune system, or other children known to be at higher risk.