

Facts About Pneumococcal Disease For Adults

What is pneumococcal disease?

Pneumococcal disease is an infection caused by a certain type of bacteria. If these bacteria invade the lungs, they may cause the most common kind of bacterial pneumonia. The same bacteria can also attack the bloodstream (bacteremia) and/or the brain (meningitis). The infection kills thousands of people in the United States each year, most of them over 65 years of age.

What are the symptoms of pneumococcal disease?

The symptoms of pneumococcal pneumonia include high fever, cough with chest pain and mucus, chest pain that increases with breathing, shaking chills, and breathlessness. Changes in level of consciousness or the presence of confusion are symptoms commonly found in older adults. However, these symptoms are not always evident. The symptoms of pneumococcal meningitis include stiff neck, fever, mental confusion and disorientation, and photophobia (avoidance of looking at light due to pain). The symptoms of pneumococcal bacteremia may include a combination of pneumonia, meningitis, arthritis, and fever.

How is pneumococcal disease prevented?

There is a vaccine to protect against pneumococcal disease. It is safe, it works and one shot lasts most people a lifetime. People who get vaccinated are protected against the most common types of bacteria that cause pneumococcal disease.

Who should get pneumococcal vaccine?

- People who are age 65 or older.
- People who have a chronic illness such as cardiovascular and pulmonary diseases, diabetes mellitus, alcoholism, cirrhosis, or cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) leaks.
- People with a weakened immune system due to illnesses such as HIV infection or AIDS, chronic renal failure, organ transplantation, Hodgkin's disease, lymphoma, multiple myeloma, and those who have had their spleen removed.
- Residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities.
- Alaskan Natives and certain American Indian populations.

Is the vaccine safe?

The vaccine is safe and effective in preventing illness and death due to pneumococcal disease. Some people have mild side effects from the shot, but these are usually minor and last only a short time. When side effects do occur, the most common include swelling and soreness at the spot where the shot was given. A few people experience fever and muscle pain. As with any medicine, there are very small risks that serious problems, even death, could occur after getting a vaccine. However, the risks from the disease far outweigh the risks from the vaccine. You cannot get

pneumococcal disease from the vaccine.

Do not take this shot if:

- You have had a serious reaction to pneumococcal vaccine
- You are pregnant or nursing
- You have a fever. (Delay the shot until the fever is gone)
- You are currently receiving radiation, chemotherapy, or immunosuppressive therapy

Reactions:

If you become ill and visit a doctor, hospital or clinic in the four weeks after today's shot, please call:

**Pomperaug District Department of Health
800 Main Street South
Southbury, CT
203-264-9616**