

Facts About Pneumococcal Disease

Why vaccinate adults against pneumococcal disease?

- Pneumococcal disease is a very serious infection that causes pneumonia, meningitis, and bloodstream infection (sepsis).
- About one million US adults get pneumococcal pneumonia every year and 5 to 7 percent will die from it. Fewer will get pneumococcal meningitis or sepsis, but the mortality rate in this group is higher (10 percent or more).
- In the US, pneumococcal pneumonia, meningitis, and bloodstream infections kill tens of thousands each year, including 18,000 adults age 65 years and older.
- Pneumococcal disease can cause serious illness and lifelong complications. Pneumococcal meningitis can cause hearing loss, seizures, blindness, and paralysis. Serious heart problems are common among patients hospitalized with pneumococcal pneumonia.
- In its worst forms, pneumococcal disease kills one in every four to five people over the age of 65 who gets it.

Which adults need pneumococcal vaccination?

There are two types of pneumococcal vaccine recommended for adults: a pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV13) and a pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine (PPSV23).

CDC recommends both PCV13 and PPSV23 for*

- All adults age 65 years and older
- Adults age 19 to 64 years with:
 - Conditions or treatments that affect the immune system (such as: HIV, lymphoma, leukemia, or Hodgkin disease, chronic kidney disease, radiation therapy, or certain long-term steroid use)
 - Functional or anatomic asplenia†
 - Cochlear implants or cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) leaks

*PCV13 and PPSV23 cannot be given at the same visit. Your healthcare professional can tell you which vaccines you need and the timing that is right for you.

†A second PPSV23 vaccine is recommended for these persons five years after the first PPSV23.

CDC recommends only PPSV23 for the following adults age 19 to 64 years:

- Those with chronic conditions such as asthma, diabetes, lung, heart, or liver disease, or alcoholism
- Cigarette smokers
- Residents of nursing homes or other long-term care facilities

These individuals should receive a dose of PCV13 when they reach age 65 and should consult with their healthcare provider.

What happens when someone gets pneumococcal disease?

- Pneumococcal disease can cause pneumonia, meningitis, or bloodstream infection.
- People with pneumococcal disease may have a combination of high fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, chest pain, stiff neck, disorientation, and sensitivity to light.
- Among those who get pneumococcal disease, those age 65 and older and adults with underlying medical conditions are at higher risk of death

Why is pneumococcal vaccine important?

Pneumococcal disease is a potentially deadly infection that can come on very quickly. Getting vaccinated is the best way to protect against this infection. Health officials updated pneumococcal vaccine recommendations in 2013 and 2014, so even people who have been vaccinated before are urged to check with their healthcare professional to see if they need an additional vaccination to stay protected.

FAQ: Can I get the influenza and pneumococcal vaccines at the same time?

Yes. Influenza and one pneumococcal vaccine can be given at the same time, but in different arms. In fact, pneumococcal disease can be a complication of influenza, so getting both vaccines is a smart choice. If you need a second pneumococcal vaccine, your healthcare professional will tell you when to come back for it.

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