

PROTECTION FROM PNEUMOCOCCAL DISEASE

What is Pneumococcal Disease?

Pneumococcal disease is caused by the bacteria *Streptococcus pneumoniae*. These bacteria cause 40-60% of all ear infections and are the most frequent cause of recurrent ear infections in children. Pneumococcal disease can also cause serious infections such as meningitis (an infection in the lining of the brain or spinal cord) and pneumonia (infection in the lungs) which could lead to serious long-term effects like deafness and brain injury or possible death. These infections are known as Invasive Pneumococcal Diseases (IPD).

How is this disease spread?

Pneumococcal disease is spread from an infected person to another person through the respiratory route which includes kissing, coughing, sneezing, sharing of food or drinks or from handling soiled items such as tissues.

How can this disease be prevented?

Immunization and clean, cover and contain are the best methods of prevention.

There are two vaccines available. Children receive immunization against pneumococcal disease at 2, 4 and 12 months of age as part of the routine provincial program. One extra dose is given to infants at 6 months if they are at risk for developing this disease as advised by their health care provider. Older children and adults with conditions putting them at high risk for pneumococcal disease are advised by their health care provider for the appropriate vaccine for their age and medical condition.

What are the vaccine's common side effects?

Some individuals may have redness, tenderness, swelling or hardness at the injection site. There may be fever and some children may be fussy, restless and not very hungry for a day or two. For soreness or fever, a fever reducing medication such as acetaminophen can be given. If you or your child has any other side effects, you should notify your doctor or community/public health nurse.

Are Pneumococcal vaccines safe?

All vaccines recommended by the National Advisory Committee on Immunization and the Provincial Department of Health and Community Services, such as this one, are safe and effective

Who should NOT get the Pneumococcal vaccine?

Anyone who has a severe allergy to any contents of the vaccine or had a reaction to a previous dose of this vaccine in the past should talk to their Health Care Provider for advice about future immunization with this vaccine.

**For additional information and
services contact the Regional Health
Authority in your community**