

Facts About Invasive Pneumococcal Disease for Adults

What is invasive pneumococcal disease?

Pneumococcal disease is an infection caused by a type of bacteria called *Streptococcus pneumoniae*. When these bacteria invade the lungs, they can cause pneumonia. They can also invade the bloodstream (bacteremia) and/or the tissues and fluids surrounding the brain and spinal cord (meningitis). Invasive pneumococcal disease kills thousands of people in the United States each year, most of them 65 years of age or older.

Symptoms

The symptoms of pneumococcal meningitis include stiff neck, fever, mental confusion and disorientation, and photophobia (visual sensitivity to light). The symptoms of pneumococcal bacteremia may be similar to some of the symptoms of pneumonia and meningitis, along with joint pain and fever and chills.

Prevention

There is a vaccine to protect adults against invasive pneumococcal disease. The vaccine is safe and effective. A single dose of the pneumococcal vaccine protects against the 23 different types of *Streptococcus pneumoniae* bacteria that are responsible for causing greater than 90% of all pneumococcal disease cases.

Who should get pneumococcal vaccine?

- ◆ People who are 65 years of age or older.
- ◆ People two years of age or older who have a chronic illness such as cardiovascular or pulmonary (lung) diseases, sickle cell disease, diabetes, alcoholism, chronic liver diseases, or cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) leaks.
- ◆ People with a weakened immune system due to illnesses such as HIV infection, AIDS, chronic renal failure, organ transplantation, Hodgkin's disease, lymphoma, multiple myeloma, and those who have had their spleen removed or whose spleen is dysfunctional due to an illness such as sickle cell disease.
- ◆ People in nursing homes or other long-term care facilities and certain Native American or Alaska Native populations.

Vaccine Safety

The pneumococcal vaccine is safe and effective in preventing illness and death due to pneumococcal disease. Some people have experienced mild side effects, 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 injection site. A few people experience fever and muscle pain. As with any medicine, there are very small risks that serious problems could occur after getting the vaccine. However, the potential risks associated with pneumococcal disease are much greater than the potential risks associated with the pneumococcal vaccine. You cannot get pneumococcal disease from the vaccine.

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- FACT:** Invasive pneumococcal disease can be prevented with a safe, effective vaccine.
- FACT:** You cannot get pneumococcal disease from the vaccine.
- FACT:** Pneumococcal vaccine is fully covered by Medicare Part B if the healthcare provider accepts the Medicare-approved amount.
- FACT:** Pneumococcal vaccine can be given at any time during the year.
- FACT:** Pneumococcal vaccine can be given at the same time as influenza vaccine.
- FACT:** Each year in the U.S., pneumococcal disease accounts for 41,000 cases of bacteremia (bloodstream infection) and meningitis (inflammation of the tissues and fluids surrounding the brain and spinal cord).
- FACT:** Only 56% of non-institutionalized adults 65 years of age or older, and less than 20% of adults in other high risk groups who should get the pneumococcal vaccine, have received it.
- FACT:** A single dose of pneumococcal vaccine is recommended for most persons aged 65 years or older. Some people who were younger than 65 when they received the pneumococcal vaccine may need a second dose at age 65.