



Pneumococcal Disease and Vaccination



What is Pneumococcal disease?

Pneumococcal disease is an infection caused by a type of bacteria called *Streptococcus pneumoniae*. This bacterium can cause serious infections of the lungs (pneumonia), the blood (bacteremia), and the covering of the brain (meningitis). Pneumococcal infection is a major cause of death worldwide, particularly in developing countries.

What are the symptoms of pneumococcal disease?

Many individuals who have pneumococcal bacteria in their nose and throat will not show symptoms. Pneumococcal bacteria can cause infections to certain areas of the body. Symptoms include:

Ear (Otitis Media)

- Fever
- Sore throat

Sinus (Sinusitis)

- Headache
- Stuffy nose

Lung (Pneumonia)

- Coughing
- Difficulty breathing

In rare cases, the bacteria can invade other parts of the body such as the brain and spinal cord, which is called invasive pneumococcal disease. Symptoms include, but are not limited to:

- High fever
- Loss of appetite
- Stiff neck
- Coughing
- Headache
- Vomiting

How is Pneumococcal disease spread?

Infected individuals can spread the infection to others through secretions from their mouth and nose (coughing and sneezing).

What does the Pneumococcal Vaccine do?

The vaccine consists of purified particles from the outside of the pneumococcal bacteria. The vaccine cannot give you pneumonia. The vaccine protects most individuals from getting sick. It is given as a single needle in the arm and can be given at any time of the year and can be given the same time as the flu vaccine, at a different site. Side effects of the vaccine may include soreness/redness of the affected arm for a day or two, swelling at the injection site, or low-grade fever (less than 38.5 celcius) that goes away the following day.

Who should get the vaccine?

- Individuals 65 years of age or older.
- Individuals in long-term care facilities and personal care homes.
- Pregnant and breast-feeding women may get the vaccine.
- Individuals 2 years of age and older with the following health concerns:
 - Heart, lung, kidney, or liver disease
 - HIV/AIDS
 - Cancer
 - No spleen
 - Organ transplant