Pneumococcal Vaccines (PCV13 and PPSV23)

Addressing Common Questions about Pneumococcal Vaccination for Adults

What diseases do these vaccines protect against?
There are two vaccines that protect against pneumococcal disease, which is caused by infection with a common bacterium called Streptococcus pneumoniae:
- PCV13 (pneumococcal conjugate vaccine) protects against 13 of the approximately 90 types of pneumococcal bacteria that can cause pneumococcal disease, including pneumonia, meningitis, and bacteremia.
- PPSV23 (pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine) protects against 23 types of pneumococcal bacteria. This vaccine helps prevent invasive infections like meningitis and bacteremia, but only offers low levels of protection against pneumonia.

How common is pneumococcal disease?
Each year in the United States, pneumococcal disease kills thousands of adults, including 18,000 adults 65 years or older. Thousands more end up in the hospital because of pneumococcal disease.

How does pneumococcal disease spread?
Pneumococcal bacteria can spread from person to person by direct contact with respiratory secretions, like saliva or mucus. People can carry the bacteria in their nose and throat, and can spread the bacteria without feeling sick.

Who is at risk for pneumococcal disease?
- People 65 years and older
- People with certain health conditions, such as chronic lung disease or diabetes
- People who are taking medications that lower the body’s resistance to infection (immunosuppressed)
- People who smoke cigarettes

What could happen if I get this disease?
Pneumococcal disease ranges from mild to very dangerous. Pneumococcal disease can spread from the nose and throat to ears or sinuses, causing generally mild infections, or spread to other parts of the body, leading to severe health problems such as lung infections (pneumonia), blood infections (bacteremia), and infection of the lining of the brain and spinal cord (meningitis).

These illnesses can lead to disabilities like deafness, brain damage, or loss of arms or legs. These illnesses can also be Life-threatening:
- Pneumococcal pneumonia kills about 1 out of 20 people who get it.
- Pneumococcal meningitis kills about 1 out of 5 people who get it.
- Pneumococcal bacteremia kills about 3 out of 10 people who get it.

Adults with chronic conditions are at increased risk of developing complications from pneumococcal disease.

Who should get these vaccines?
PCV13: Anyone who has ever had a life-threatening allergic reaction to a dose of the vaccine, to an earlier pneumococcal vaccine called PCV7 (or Prevnar), or to any vaccine containing diphtheria toxoid (for example, DTaP), should not get PCV13. Anyone with a severe allergy to any component of PCV13 should not get the vaccine.
PPSV23: Anyone who has ever had a life-threatening allergic reaction to a dose of the vaccine or with a severe allergy to any component of the vaccine should not get the vaccine.

Where can I get these vaccines?
- Pneumococcal vaccines may be available at private doctor offices, public or community health clinics, pharmacies, or other community locations (such as schools/universities, workplaces, religious centers or places of worship). Check with your doctor or pharmacist or use the Adult Vaccine Finder (vaccine.healthmap.org) to help find places that provide pneumococcal vaccines near you.
- Visit www.cdc.gov/vaccines/adults.


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