



Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine

What is invasive pneumococcal disease (IPD)?

IPD is an infection caused by the *streptococcus pneumoniae* bacteria. It can cause:

- pneumonia (lung infection)
- bacteraemia (infection of the blood)
- meningitis (infection of the lining of the brain and spinal cord).

Pneumonia, bacteraemia and meningitis can sometimes cause death or long lasting complications, especially in people with high-risk medical conditions. Pneumococcal infection is also a frequent cause of ear infections. Sometimes antibiotics do not work against pneumococcal infections (antibiotic resistance) making them more difficult to treat.

How do you get invasive pneumococcal disease?

The bacteria that cause IPD can live at the back of the nose and throat without causing illness. The bacteria spread through droplets in the air from coughing or sneezing, through direct contact with respiratory secretions and through contact with the saliva of an infected person when items such as bottles, eating utensils and toys are shared.

Why is the pneumococcal vaccine important?

Streptococcus pneumoniae is the most common cause of bacterial infection in children under 2 years of age. Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine can prevent these infections.

Who should get the vaccine?

Starting at age 2 months, infants should receive the vaccine as part of their routine immunization. The vaccine is publicly funded for all children under the age of 5 years. This vaccine is particularly important for children who have medical conditions that put them at increased risk for IPD (high-risk children). High-risk children are those who have any of the following high-risk medical conditions:

- asplenia, splenic dysfunction, sickle-cell disease and other sickle cell haemoglobinopathies
- cerebrospinal fluid leaks
- HIV infection
- primary immune deficiency
- other conditions associated with immunosuppression (malignancies, long term systemic corticosteroids and other immunosuppressive therapy)
- solid organ transplants

When should the pneumococcal vaccine be given?

The recommended pneumococcal conjugate vaccine series begins at the age of 2 months. Healthy children starting their series at 2 months of age should receive 3 doses of vaccine (at 2, 4 and 12 months of age). High risk children with one or more of the previously mentioned medical conditions should receive four doses of vaccine (at 2, 4, 6 and 15 months of age). The number of doses required depends on the child's age at the time of the first dose of pneumococcal conjugate vaccine and high- risk factors.

You should always discuss the benefits and risks of any vaccine with your doctor/nurse practitioner or local public health unit.

Are there side effects from the vaccine?

Most reactions tend to be mild and include soreness, redness, itching and/or rash where the needle was given. Other side effects such as decreased appetite, irritability, drowsiness, change in sleep pattern, restlessness, diarrhea and vomiting may occur. Severe reactions are rare. Report any side effects or severe vaccine reactions to your doctor/nurse practitioner or local public health unit.

Who should not get the vaccine?

Children should not receive the vaccine if they have allergies to any component of the vaccine (diphtheria toxoid, succinic acid, Polysorbate 80, aluminum) or if they had an anaphylactic reaction to a prior dose of the vaccine.

When should I call my doctor?

Call your doctor/nurse practitioner or go to the nearest hospital emergency department if your child has any of the following symptoms within three days of getting the vaccine:

- hives
- swelling of the face or mouth
- trouble breathing, hoarseness or wheezing
- high fever (over 40°C or 104°F)
- convulsions or seizures
- other serious reactions to the vaccine

Who should I talk to if I have any questions?

For more information contact your doctor/nurse practitioner or Renfrew County & District Health Unit Health Info Line at 613-735-8666 or 1-800-267-1097, ext.666.

Your record of protection

After your child receives any immunization, make sure his/her personal immunization record (Yellow Card) is updated. Keep it in a safe place! You may be asked to show this record of immunization when your child registers for school or day care.

Renfrew County and District Health Unit

7 International Drive
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613-735-8666 or 1-800-267-1097, Ext. 666.

Adapted from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, Immunization: Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine (December 2013). Publicly Funded Immunization Schedule Ontario (March 2015).

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