

# Pneumococcal Vaccine

## Why should I receive the vaccine?

About 40,000 Americans die from pneumonia and pneumonia-related diseases every year. About one out of every 20 people who get pneumococcal pneumonia die from the disease. Drugs such as penicillin, which were once helpful in treating these infections, are now less helpful due to disease resistance; so there is even more reason to get vaccinated



ILLUSTRATION BY PAUL PALCZO

Although everyone is at risk for the disease, there are some people who are at greater risk. They include people 65 years and older, who have heart and lung disease, kidney failure, diabetes, alcoholism, cancer or HIV infection. Pneumococcal disease can lead to serious infections of the lungs (which is pneumonia), the blood (bacteremia) and the covering of the brain (meningitis).

### What is Pneumococcal Polysaccharide Vaccine?

The vaccine (PPV) protects a person against 23 types of pneumococcal bacteria. Within 2-3 weeks of getting the shot, a healthy adult develops protection to most or all of these types.

*The purpose of this patient education handout is to further explain or remind you about a medical condition. This handout is a general guide only. If you have specific questions, be sure to discuss them with your healthcare provider. This handout may be reproduced for distribution to patients.*

### Who Should Get the Vaccine?

- People who are age 65 and older
- Anyone older than age 2 who has long-term health conditions or diseases such as lung and heart disease, alcoholism, sickle cell disease, diabetes, liver disease, HIV or AIDS, organ or bone marrow transplant, lymphoma, Hodgkin's disease, leukemia and multiple myeloma, or has had their spleen removed.
- Anyone older than age 2 who is on medication or treatments that reduce the body's resistance to infections, for example, some cancer medications, radiation therapy and long-term steroid use.
- Anyone older than age 2 who is Alaskan Native or American Indian.

### How Many Times Should I be Vaccinated?

In most cases you only require one dose. However, a second dose is recommended for those older than 65, who got their first dose when they were younger than 65 or if 5 or more years have passed since that dose. A second dose is also recommended for people who have sickle cell disease, HIV infection or AIDS, cancer, leukemia, lymphoma, multiple myeloma, kidney failure, a damaged spleen, organ or bone marrow transplant or who are taking immunosuppressant medications such as long-term steroids or chemotherapy.

### What are the side effects?

Mild side effects are pain, swelling or redness at the site where one receives the shot. Although it is rare, some people may later have bad allergic reactions after getting the shot. Some of the reactions are shortness of breath, hives and shock. If such reactions occur, you should call your primary healthcare provider immediately.

### How Can I Learn More About the PPV Vaccine?

- Ask your primary healthcare provider
- Call your local or state department of health
- Contact the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at 800-232-7468 (English) or 800-232-0233 (Spanish) or visit <http://www.cdc.gov/nip>. ■

### Resources

1. Quality Insights of Pennsylvania. (2003). *PPV 23 Guideline pocket card*. Harrisburg, PA: Author. Retrieved March 4, 2004 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.qipa.org/QIP-PDF/ppv23card.pdf>.
2. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2002, September). *Pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine: What you need to know?* Retrieved Feb. 19, 2004 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.cdc.gov/nip/publications/VIS/vis-PneumoConjugate.pdf>

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