

# Communicable Diseases

## Polysaccharide Pneumococcal Vaccine

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The polysaccharide pneumococcal vaccine (which uses the brand name Pneumo 23™) protects against diseases caused by twenty-three common strains of *Streptococcus pneumoniae* (Pneumococcus) bacteria.

### What is *Streptococcus pneumoniae*?

Infection with the *Streptococcus pneumoniae* bacteria can cause very serious illness or death. These bacteria are responsible for meningitis, blood infections, pneumonia, and ear infections in children, the elderly, and certain high risk groups. Pneumococcus bacteria are spread by:

- coughing
- sneezing, and
- sharing food, drinks, toothbrushes, or toys that have been put into the mouth

Pneumococcal infections can be difficult to treat because the bacteria have become resistant to some of the antibiotic drugs used to treat them. That is why it is important to prevent Pneumococcal infections. Pneumo 23 can prevent infections caused by 23 types of *Streptococcus pneumoniae* bacteria. These 23 types count for most cases of Pneumococcal disease.

### Who should receive Pneumo 23?

The best time to get the vaccine is as soon as you develop a high-risk medical condition or when you turn 65. The vaccine is recommended for:

- anyone 65 years of age and older
- all residents of nursing homes, homes for the aged and chronic care facilities
- adults and children more than two years old who have the following high risk medical conditions:
  - ♦ chronic heart, lung or kidney disease (excluding asthma, except those treated with high-dose Corticosteroid therapy) Pneumococcal
  - ♦ chronic renal disease or Nephrotic syndrome
  - ♦ chronic cerebrospinal fluid leaks
  - ♦ cirrhosis of the liver

- ♦ alcoholism
- ♦ diabetes mellitus
- ♦ HIV infection or AIDS
- ♦ other immunosuppressive diseases
- ♦ people without a spleen or a spleen that does not work properly
- ♦ sickle cell disease
- ♦ solid organ transplant recipients
- ♦ cochlear implant recipients (before/after the implant)

### Is the Pneumo 23 safe?

Yes. Serious side effects are rare. Mild pain, swelling, and redness for a few days are common at the spot where the needle was given. Occasionally, slight fever, headache, tiredness, joint pain, muscle aches, and rash can occur.

**Call your family health care provider or local hospital if your child has any of the following within three days of getting the needle:**

- high fever (over 40°C or 104°F)
- crying for more than three hours
- convulsions or seizures
- very pale color and serious drowsiness
- hives (itchy rash)
- swelling of the face or mouth
- trouble breathing
- other serious problems

### Who should not get the Pneumo 23 vaccine?

Your family health care provider may decide not to give your child's needle or may give a different vaccine if your child has:

- a high fever or serious infection worse than a cold

- had an allergic reaction to a previous dose of Prevnar or Pneumo 23
- a severe allergy to any parts of the vaccine such as: phenol or latex
- anyone who has received Pneumo 23 in the last three years, except in special circumstances
- anyone who has received two doses of Pneumo 23 in the past
- anyone who is less than 2 years of age

If you have a bleeding disorder, please tell the nurse before receiving Pneumo 23.

Pregnancy is **not** a contraindication to pneumococcal vaccine but it is preferable to administer the vaccine prior to pregnancy or after the first trimester.

### **Whom should I talk to if I have any more questions about the Pneumo 23?**

Talk to your family health care provider or the Huron County Health Unit (519-482-3416) for more information.

### **Your Record of Protection**

After your child receives any immunization, make sure the doctor updates the yellow personal Immunization Record card. Keep it in a safe place!