

Pneumococcal Polysaccharide Vaccine (Pneu-P-23)

Communicable Disease Control – Factsheet

Immunization has saved more lives in Canada in the last 50 years than any other medical intervention. Vaccines help your immune system to recognize and fight bacteria and viruses that cause diseases.

Why should I get Pneu-P-23?

Immunization is the best way to protect yourself against pneumococcal infection.

Pneumococcal infection can cause serious and sometimes fatal disease, including infections of the lungs (pneumonia), blood (bacteremia) and covering of the brain (meningitis). Meningitis can lead to permanent problems like deafness and brain damage.

When you are immunized you also help protect others, because you are less likely to spread infection.

What is pneumococcal infection?

Pneumococcal infection is caused by bacteria that can spread easily from one person to another. The bacteria normally live in fluids in the nose, mouth and throat. It is spread by coughing, sneezing, or by sharing food or drinks. Most people who carry the bacteria do not get sick, but they can still spread it to other people.

What is Pneu-P-23?

There are more than 90 different types of pneumococcal bacteria. Pneu-P-23 protects against the 23 types that cause most of the severe pneumococcal infections. The vaccine is approved by Health Canada and is provided free by Manitoba Health to anyone who is at high risk for pneumococcal disease.

Most people only need one dose. If you have a chronic health condition, talk to your doctor or public health nurse to find out if and when you need a second dose.

Who should get Pneu-P-23?

- Seniors aged 65 years or older
- Anyone living in a personal care home or long-term care facility
- Homeless individuals
- Illicit drug users
- Persons 2 to 64 years of age with one or more of the following:
 - no spleen, or a spleen that is not working properly
 - sickle cell disease
 - an immune system weakened by disease or medical treatment (including long-term high-dose steroid therapy)
 - kidney, heart, liver or lung disease
 - alcoholism
 - diabetes
 - cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) leak
 - a solid organ or stem cell transplant
 - a cochlear implant or waiting for one

Children under two years of age are also at high risk for becoming sick. However, they need a different kind of pneumococcal vaccine. It is called *Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine* (Pneu-C-13).

Who should NOT get Pneu-P-23?

Speak with a public health nurse or doctor if you have had a serious reaction to a previous dose of any vaccine, or if you have any severe allergies.

You should not get immunized if you have a high fever. But you can still get the Pneu-P-23 shot if you have a mild illness, like a cold.

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Possible side-effects of Pneu-P-23

Vaccines are known to be very safe. It is much safer to get the vaccine than to get pneumococcal disease.

Common reactions to the vaccine include soreness, redness and swelling where the vaccine was given. Some people may have fever, fatigue or a headache. These are mild reactions and usually last one to two days. Acetaminophen (ex. Tylenol®) can be given for fever or soreness.

ASA (Aspirin®) should NEVER be given to children because it can cause a severe liver and brain disease called Reye's Syndrome.

It is important to stay in the clinic for 15 minutes after getting any vaccine because there is a rare possibility of a severe allergic reaction. This can include hives, difficulty breathing, or swelling of the throat, tongue or lips. If this happens after you leave the clinic, **call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department for immediate treatment.**

Report any serious or unexpected side-effects to a public health nurse or doctor.

For more information on the Pneu-P-23:

Talk to your doctor or public health nurse.

Call Health Links-Info Santé in Winnipeg at 788-8200; toll-free elsewhere in Manitoba 1-888-315-9257.

Or visit:

Manitoba Public Health website

www.manitoba.ca/health/publichealth/index.html

Public Health Agency of Canada

www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/im/vpd-mev/pneumococcal-eng.php