

Pneumococcal Polysaccharide (Pneu-P-23) Vaccine

Public Health - Factsheet

Immunization is one of the most important accomplishments in public health that has, over the past 50 years, led to the elimination, containment and control of diseases that were once very common in Canada.¹ Vaccines help the immune system to recognize and fight bacteria and viruses that cause disease.

What is pneumococcal infection?

Pneumococcal infection is a very serious illness that is caused by a germ (or bacteria) and is most common in the very young and very old as well as among people living with chronic medical conditions or lifestyle conditions that increase their risk. A pneumococcal infection can cause ear and sinus infections and pneumonia (an infection of the lungs). It can also cause serious and sometimes fatal infections including meningitis (an infection of the lining that covers the brain) and septicemia (an infection of the blood). Those who survive meningitis and septicemia may suffer from permanent brain damage and hearing loss.

Not everyone who gets a pneumococcal infection develops symptoms but they can still spread it to others, especially if they cough or sneeze. The germ is easily spread from person to person by coughing, sneezing, kissing or sharing food, drinks and other objects that have been in the mouth of a person with the disease (ex: soothers, toys, cigarettes, musical instruments). It's important to cover your nose and mouth with your forearm when you cough or sneeze and wash your hands often with soap and water (or hand sanitizer if soap and water are unavailable), especially after coughing and sneezing.

What is the pneumococcal polysaccharide (Pneu-P-23) vaccine?

There are more than 92 different types of pneumococcal bacteria. The Pneu-P-23 vaccine protects against 23 types that can cause serious pneumococcal infections.

The Pneu-P-23 vaccine is approved by Health Canada and is available free-of-charge to all Manitobans who are 65 years of age and older as well as to some people two years of age and older who are at increased risk of pneumococcal infection.

Why should people get the Pneu-P-23 vaccine?

Immunization is the best way to protect against pneumococcal infection that can often be serious and sometimes fatal.

Vaccines help prepare the body to fight potential future exposure to pneumococcal bacteria by getting your immune system ready.

The vaccine helps protect you, your family and other people in your community.

Who should get the Pneu-P-23 vaccine?

The Pneu-P-23 vaccine is offered free-of-charge as part of Manitoba's routine immunization schedule to people 65 years of age and older as well as to residents of personal care homes or long-term care facilities.

All Manitobans are eligible for a dose of Pneu-P-23 vaccine once they turn 65 years of age to prevent pneumococcal infections.

The Pneu-P-23 vaccine is especially important for people at increased risk of pneumococcal infection and is provided free-of-charge to individuals two years of age and older with one or more of the following medical conditions and/or lifestyle factors, including:

- Alcoholism
- Cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) leak
- Cochlear implants (including those who are to receive implants)
- Congenital immunodeficiencies involving any part of the immune system
- Diabetes
- Heart or lung disease
- Hemoglobinopathies

¹ Public Health Agency of Canada

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- HIV infection
- Homelessness
- Illicit drug use
- Immunocompromising therapy including use of long-term corticosteroids and post-organ transplant therapy
- Kidney disease (including nephrotic syndrome)
- Liver disease (including hepatic cirrhosis due to any cause)
- Malignant neoplasms including leukemia and lymphoma
- Neurologic condition that impairs clearance of oral secretions
- No spleen, or a spleen that is not working properly
- Solid organ, islet or stem cell transplant (candidate or recipient)

Most people need only one dose of Pneu-P-23 vaccine. Some people living with certain medical conditions require a second dose of Pneu-P-23 vaccine; talk to your health care provider to determine if/when a second dose is required.

If you're 65 years of age and older and have not yet had a dose of Pneu-P-23 vaccine, talk to your health care provider about getting it at the same time as the influenza (flu) vaccine.

Children under five years of age are also at risk of getting a pneumococcal infection but they're given a different kind of vaccine as part of their routine childhood immunizations, known as the pneumococcal conjugate (Pneu-C-13) vaccine. Some individuals with chronic medical conditions may also be eligible to receive the Pneu-C-13 vaccine; talk to your health care provider about vaccine eligibility criteria.

Who should NOT get the Pneu-P-23 vaccine?

Anyone who has had a severe allergic reaction to a previous dose of Pneu-P-23 vaccine or to any of the contents of the Pneu-P-23 vaccine should talk to a health care provider.

There is no need to delay immunization because of a cold or other mild illness. However, if you are concerned, speak with a health care provider.

Possible side-effects of the Pneu-P-23 vaccine

It's much safer to get the vaccine than to get a pneumococcal infection. Health Canada approves vaccines based on a review of quality and safety.

Common reactions to the vaccine include soreness, redness or swelling where the vaccine was given. Other symptoms are fever, headache and tiredness. Acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol®) can be given for fever or soreness. These reactions usually resolve within two days after receiving the vaccine and are typically mild.

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

It's 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 or health centre for immediate attention.**

Report any serious or unexpected side-effects to a health care provider.

Your record of protection

Make sure your immunization provider updates your immunization record card after you receive an immunization. Keep the card in a safe place!

All immunizations including the Pneu-P-23 vaccine are recorded on an individual's immunization record in Manitoba's immunization registry. This registry:

- allows health care providers to find out which immunizations you or your child(ren) have had or need to have;
- may be used to produce immunization records or notify you or your health care provider if a particular immunization has been missed; and,
- allows Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living and public health officials to monitor how well vaccines work in preventing disease.

The Personal Health Information Act protects your information and/or that of your child(ren). You can have your personal health information and/or that of your child(ren) hidden from view from health care

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providers. For additional information, please contact your local public health office or speak with a health care provider.

If you need information on the immunizations that you or your child(ren) have received, contact your health care provider. Contact your local public health office for a copy of your or your child(ren)'s immunization records. For a listing of public health offices, visit: www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/offices.html.

For more information on pneumococcal infection or the Pneu-P-23 vaccine:

Talk to your health care provider.

Call Health Links–Info Santé in Winnipeg at 204-788-8200; toll free elsewhere in Manitoba 1-888-315-9257.

Or, visit:

Manitoba's Immunization Program:

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

Government of Canada:

www.canada.ca/en/public-health/topics/immunization-vaccines.html

Please visit the Vaccine Factsheets and Resources webpage for the most current version:

www.manitoba.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/div/vaccines.html