

Pneumococcal Polysaccharide Immunization

The **Pneumococcal Polysaccharide immunization** is given to prevent or lessen the complications of invasive pneumococcal infections. This vaccine covers 23 different strains of the bacteria. These bacteria are spread from person to person through droplets in the air via coughing/sneezing, or direct contact via saliva. The risk is much higher when you are already infected with a viral infection such as influenza.

Pneumococcal bacteria can cause:

- Ear and sinus infections
- Pneumonia
- Meningitis (infection of the fluid in the brain/spinal cord)
- Infections of the blood stream

Complications of pneumococcal bacteria may lead to:

- Deafness
- Brain damage
- Death (26% of meningitis cases)

Why is the Pneumococcal Polysaccharide vaccine recommended?

Many people who are exposed to pneumococcal bacteria only have mild symptoms, but there are some people who are at high risk of getting very sick. The vaccine is offered free of charge to high risk individuals such as: those over age 65, those with chronic conditions (i.e. diabetes; liver, heart, lung and kidney disease; asplenia or alcoholism), those who are immunocompromised, smokers, illicit drug users, and the homeless. For certain high risk conditions, you may require a booster dose. Talk with your health care provider about what you may require.

Possible side effects of the immunization:

Common reactions to the immunization may include redness, tenderness, and swelling at the injection site. Some may develop a fever, headache, and fatigue. These are generally mild, and only last 1-2 days.

Side effects of the immunization are easily relieved by: Applying a cold/damp compress to the site, administering acetaminophen or ibuprofen for temperatures 38.5°C or higher. See your health care provider if your symptoms are severe or last longer than 48 hours.

It is important to stay in the clinic for 15 minutes after getting any immunization because there is a rare possibility of developing a severe allergic reaction which is treatable at the clinic. This happens to fewer than 1 in 1 million people. If it happens after you leave the clinic, call 911 or the local emergency number.

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