

What Do I Need to Know About the Pneumococcal Pneumonia Vaccine?

What Is the Pneumococcal Pneumonia Vaccine?

The pneumococcal vaccine protects against infections from a type of bacteria called pneumococcus. Pneumococcus is a common cause of pneumonia (a lung infection), as well as other serious infections. The vaccine prepares your immune system to recognize and fight pneumococcal bacteria. The vaccine is usually given through an injection into the arm. Some versions can also be inhaled. The vaccines do not contain living or dead bacteria. The pneumococcal vaccine does not protect you from other lung infections like the flu (influenza), COVID-19, RSV (respiratory syncytial virus), or other kinds of bacteria that cause pneumonia. It is still important to get your flu shot every year and other vaccines your doctor recommends, even if you already got the pneumococcal vaccine.

What Are Benefits of Pneumococcal Pneumonia Vaccines?

The vaccine substantially lowers your risk of hospitalization or dying from serious pneumococcal infection. Vaccination can reduce the risk of pneumonia-related deaths by almost half.

Why Is There a New Pneumococcal Pneumonia Vaccine, and How Does It Differ From Prior Versions?

There are several types of pneumococcal bacteria that can cause pneumonia. Being vaccinated against one type of pneumococcus may not protect you from other types that could make you sick. Previous pneumococcal pneumonia vaccines like PPSV23 or PCV13 do not protect against all types of the pneumococcal bacteria that cause pneumonia. Newer vaccines were made in 2021 (PCV15 and PCV20) and 2024 (PCV21). These help to prevent infections from types of bacteria not covered by older versions.

What Are the Potential Side Effects?

Side effects are frequent but generally mild. The most common side effect is pain or redness at the site of injection. Less common side effects include fever, feeling tired, muscle ache, and headache. These are less severe than for other vaccines like flu and shingles. These effects can be treated with over-the-counter medications and generally go away within 24 to 48 hours. Life-threatening allergic reactions are extremely rare but possible. Seek immediate medical attention if you experience severe symptoms like difficulty breathing or progressive weakness after vaccination. The pneumonia vaccine cannot cause pneumonia or other bacterial illness.

Who Should Get a New Pneumococcal Pneumonia Vaccine?

All adults 50 years and older who have not been vaccinated should receive one of the new vaccines: PCV21, PCV20, or a sequence of

Pneumococcal pneumonia vaccine

The bacteria called pneumococcus is a common cause of pneumonia and other serious infections. The pneumococcal vaccine lowers the risk of hospitalization or dying of serious pneumococcal infection by preparing the immune system to recognize and fight pneumococcus.

The pneumococcal vaccine cannot cause pneumonia or other bacterial illness but can have mild side effects.

- Mild pain or redness at the injection site is most common
- Fever, feeling tired, muscle aches, and headaches are less common and usually go away within 24-48 hours with over-the-counter medications
- Life-threatening allergic reactions are extremely rare

Seek immediate medical attention if you have severe symptoms like difficulty breathing or progressive weakness.

Should I get a pneumococcal vaccine?

- Adults aged 18-49 years with certain risk conditions and all adults aged 50 years or older should receive pneumococcal vaccination
- There are several types of pneumonia-causing pneumococcal bacteria, and previous vaccines do not protect against all of them
- New vaccines were developed to protect against bacteria not covered by previous vaccines

Talk to your doctor about which vaccine is right for you.



The pneumococcal vaccine does not protect against other lung infections like the flu, COVID-19, or other types of pneumonia. It is still important to get a yearly flu shot and other recommended vaccines.

PCV15 followed by PPSV23. People younger than 50 years with certain health problems should also get the new vaccine. These health problems include diabetes; chronic conditions affecting the heart, lungs, liver, or kidneys; current tobacco use or heavy alcohol consumption; a weak immune system from certain health problems or medications; absence or prior removal of the spleen; and a history of spinal fluid leak or a cochlear (inner ear) implant.

Most adults who got either PPSV23 and/or PCV13 should still get a booster with one of the newer vaccines. The different pneumococcal vaccines protect against different types of bacteria. Some types of bacteria are more common in people depending on their age, health, and where they live. Talk to your doctor about which vaccine is best for you.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
<https://www.cdc.gov/pneumococcal/hcp/vaccine-recommendations/index.html>

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