



Pneumococcal Vaccine (PPV23)



Seirbhís Sláinte
Níos Fearr
á Forbairt

Building a
Better Health
Service

Pneumococcal vaccine (PPV23)

Pneumococcal vaccine (PPV23) protects against serious pneumococcal disease. In some cases pneumococcal disease can cause death. Pneumococcal vaccine is also known as the pneumonia vaccine.

What is pneumococcal disease?

Pneumococcal disease is an infection caused by the bacteria (bug) *Streptococcus pneumoniae*. It can lead to pneumonia, septicaemia (a type of blood poisoning) and meningitis which can be life-threatening.

How do I get pneumococcal disease?

Pneumococcal bacteria are spread from person to person by coughing, sneezing or close contact. The bacteria can be carried in the nose and throat without doing any harm but sometimes they can invade the lungs and bloodstream causing pneumonia, septicaemia and meningitis.

How does the pneumococcal vaccine (PPV23) work?

The vaccine stimulates the body to produce antibodies against the pneumococcal bacteria (bug). If you then come into contact with the pneumococcal bacteria these antibodies will fight the infection and protect you against the disease.



Who should have the pneumococcal vaccine?

Some people, including all people aged 65 years and older, are at higher risk of serious illness from pneumococcal disease, so it is recommended that they are given the pneumococcal vaccination (PPV23).

People with the following conditions should be vaccinated with PPV23.

Everybody aged 65 years and over and everybody aged 2 years and over with:

- Diabetes
- Chronic lung, heart, liver, or kidney disease
- Chronic neurological disease
- Children aged over 2 years and under 5 years of age with a history of invasive pneumococcal disease
- Coeliac disease
- Down Syndrome



- Cochlear implants or are about to get cochlear implants
- Immune deficiency because of a disease or treatment, including cancer patients
- HIV infection
- Absent spleen or a non-functioning spleen
- CSF leaks, either congenital or complicating skull fractures or neurosurgery
- Intracranial shunt.

PPV23 vaccination is not recommended for healthy children and younger adults as they are at low risk of pneumococcal disease.

Is there anybody who should not get the pneumococcal vaccine?

The PPV23 vaccine is safe for most people. However, you should not get this vaccine if you have had a true severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to a previous dose of PPV23 vaccine or to any part of the vaccine.

If you are unwell, with a fever, vaccination should be delayed until you are better.

This PPV23 vaccine is not recommended for children under two years of age as it does not work well in this age group.

How often is the vaccine given?

If you are aged 65 years or more, you only need to get the vaccine once.

If you are younger than 65 years of age, you may need to have two doses of vaccine which should be given at least 5 years apart.

What are the side effects of the vaccine?

The pneumococcal vaccine can sometimes cause mild side effects.

The most common side effects are pain, redness and swelling at the place where the injection was given. Headache tiredness, and muscle aches can sometimes happen.

The serious side effect of a severe allergic reaction is very rare.

No other serious side effects have been reported for the vaccine.

Is it possible to get the disease from the PPV23 pneumococcal vaccine?

No, you cannot get pneumococcal disease from the vaccine as it does not contain live bacteria.

Can the vaccine be given at the same time as the influenza (flu) vaccine?

Yes, the pneumococcal vaccine (PPV23) can be given at the same time as the flu vaccine.

How do I get vaccinated?

You should speak to your doctor, practice nurse or pharmacist about the pneumococcal vaccine (PPV23).

The pneumococcal vaccine (PPV23) is free if you are 65 years or older, or if you are in an at-risk group.

If you have a medical card or “GP visit card”, the vaccine and consultation are free.

If you do not have a medical card or “GP visit card”, the vaccine is free but you will be charged a consultation fee.



Where can I get more information?

More information is available from the National Immunisation Office at: <http://bit.ly/pneumo23>

Visit www.hpra.ie or scan the QR code to read the licensed information (Patient Information Leaflet (PIL)) about the PPV23 vaccine.

