

PNEUMONIA VACCINE

It's safe and it works. The pneumococcal vaccine (pronounced new-mo-KOK-al) helps prevent a kind of pneumonia that kills thousands of people each year.

People who get the vaccine are protected against almost all bacteria that cause pneumococcal pneumonia and other pneumococcal disease. Pneumococcal bacteria can attack different parts of the body. When these bacteria invade the lungs, they cause the most common kind of bacterial pneumonia. When the same bacteria attack blood cells, they cause an infection called bacteremia. And in the brain, they cause meningitis.

Who Should Get the Vaccine?

Everyone age 65 and older should get the pneumococcal vaccine. Younger people with chronic diseases or have decreased immunity should get it also. Most physicians recommend the shot once in a lifetime. Some people need a second dose, but they should discuss this with their doctor.

Ask Your Doctor If You Need the Vaccine?

- * Are you 65 or older, or
- * Have a chronic illness, such as heart or lung disease or diabetes, or
- * Have a weak immune system (this can be the result of certain conditions, such as a loss of a spleen, some cancers. HIV infection, organ transplant medicines and other diseases).

Are There Side Effects?

Some people have side effects from the shot, but these usually are minor and don't last long. About half of the people getting the vaccine have mild swelling and soreness at the spot where the shot is given, usually on the arm. A few people (less than one percent) report fever and muscle pain. If symptoms persist longer than 4 days, call your physician or (610) 278-5117.

About the Disease and Vaccine:

There are two kinds of pneumonia – viral pneumonia and bacterial pneumonia. Bacterial pneumonia is the most serious and the one that kills many older people. The most common bacterial pneumonia in older people is pneumococcal pneumonia.

People age 65 and older are at high risk. They are two to three times more likely than people in general to get pneumococcal infections.

A recent, large study by the National Institutes of Health shows that the vaccine prevents most cases of pneumococcal pneumonia.

The U. S. Public Health Service now recommends that all people age 65 and older get this vaccine.