

## What is Pneumococcal Disease?

Pneumococcal disease is caused by the bacteria *Streptococcus pneumoniae*. These bacteria cause 40-60% of all ear infections and are the most frequent cause of recurrent ear infections in children. Pneumococcal disease can also cause serious infections such as meningitis (an infection in the lining of the brain or spinal cord) and pneumonia (infection in the lungs) which could lead to serious long-term effects like deafness and brain injury or possible death. These infections are known as Invasive Pneumococcal Diseases (IPD).

## How is this disease spread?

Pneumococcal disease is spread from an infected person to another person through the respiratory route which includes kissing, coughing, sneezing, sharing of food or drinks or from handling soiled items such as tissues.

## How can this disease be prevented?

Immunization is one of the best methods of protection in preventing the spread of disease. Preventing spread of disease can also occur by staying at home when feeling unwell.

## What pneumococcal vaccines are available?

There are two types of pneumococcal vaccine currently available:

- Pneumococcal Conjugate-15 vaccine (Pneu-C-15) which provides protection against 15 types of pneumococcal bacteria. Children receive Pneu-C-15 vaccine at 2, 4 and 12 months of age as part of the routine provincial immunization program.
- Pneumococcal Conjugate-20 (Pneu-C-20) which provides protection against 20 types of pneumococcal bacteria. Children considered to be high risk will receive Pneu-C-20 vaccine at 2, 4, 6 and 12 months of age. Older children and adults with conditions putting them at high risk for pneumococcal disease as well as all individuals 65 years of age and older may also be eligible to receive Pneu-C-20 vaccine.

Speak to your health care provider to discuss which vaccine is recommended for you.

## What are the vaccines common side effects?

Some individuals may have redness, tenderness, swelling or hardness at the injection site. There may be fever and some children may be fussy, restless and not very hungry for a day or two. For soreness or fever, a fever reducing medication such as acetaminophen can be given. If you or your child has any other side effects, you should notify your doctor or community/public health nurse.

## Are Pneumococcal vaccines safe?

All vaccines recommended by the National Advisory Committee on Immunization and the Provincial Department of Health and Community Services, such as this one, are safe and effective

## Who should NOT get the Pneumococcal vaccine?

Anyone who has a severe allergy to components of the vaccine or had a serious reaction to a previous dose of this vaccine in the past should talk to their Health Care Provider for advice about future immunizations.