

# Pneumococcal Polysaccharide Vaccine

## What You Need to Know

Many Vaccine Information Statements are available in Spanish and other languages. See [www.immunize.org/vis](http://www.immunize.org/vis)

Hojas de información sobre vacunas están disponibles en español y en muchos otros idiomas. Visite [www.immunize.org/vis](http://www.immunize.org/vis)

### 1 Why get vaccinated?

Vaccination can protect older adults (and some children and younger adults) from **pneumococcal disease**.

Pneumococcal disease is caused by bacteria that can spread from person to person through close contact. It can cause ear infections, and it can also lead to more serious infections of the:

- Lungs (pneumonia),
- Blood (bacteremia), and
- Covering of the brain and spinal cord (meningitis). Meningitis can cause deafness and brain damage, and it can be fatal.

Anyone can get pneumococcal disease, but children under 2 years of age, people with certain medical conditions, adults over 65 years of age, and cigarette smokers are at the highest risk.

About 18,000 older adults die each year from pneumococcal disease in the United States.

Treatment of pneumococcal infections with penicillin and other drugs used to be more effective. But some strains of the disease have become resistant to these drugs. This makes prevention of the disease, through vaccination, even more important.

### 2 Pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine (PPSV23)

Pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine (PPSV23) protects against 23 types of pneumococcal bacteria. It will not prevent all pneumococcal disease.

PPSV23 is recommended for:

- All adults 65 years of age and older,
- Anyone 2 through 64 years of age with certain long-term health problems,
- Anyone 2 through 64 years of age with a weakened immune system,
- Adults 19 through 64 years of age who smoke cigarettes or have asthma.

Most people need only one dose of PPSV. A second dose is recommended for certain high-risk groups. People 65 and older should get a dose even if they have gotten one or more doses of the vaccine before they turned 65.

Your healthcare provider can give you more information about these recommendations.

Most healthy adults develop protection within 2 to 3 weeks of getting the shot.

### 3 Some people should not get this vaccine

- Anyone who has had a life-threatening allergic reaction to PPSV should not get another dose.
- Anyone who has a severe allergy to any component of PPSV should not receive it. Tell your provider if you have any severe allergies.
- Anyone who is moderately or severely ill when the shot is scheduled may be asked to wait until they recover before getting the vaccine. Someone with a mild illness can usually be vaccinated.
- Children less than 2 years of age should not receive this vaccine.
- There is no evidence that PPSV is harmful to either a pregnant woman or to her fetus. However, as a precaution, women who need the vaccine should be vaccinated before becoming pregnant, if possible.



## 4 Risks of a vaccine reaction

With any medicine, including vaccines, there is a chance of side effects. These are usually mild and go away on their own, but serious reactions are also possible.

About half of people who get PPSV have mild side effects, such as redness or pain where the shot is given, which go away within about two days.

Less than 1 out of 100 people develop a fever, muscle aches, or more severe local reactions.

### Problems that could happen after any vaccine:

- People sometimes faint after a medical procedure, including vaccination. Sitting or lying down for about 15 minutes can help prevent fainting, and injuries caused by a fall. Tell your doctor if you feel dizzy, or have vision changes or ringing in the ears.
- Some people get severe pain in the shoulder and have difficulty moving the arm where a shot was given. This happens very rarely.
- Any medication can cause a severe allergic reaction. Such reactions from a vaccine are very rare, estimated at about 1 in a million doses, and would happen within a few minutes to a few hours after the vaccination.

As with any medicine, there is a very remote chance of a vaccine causing a serious injury or death.

The safety of vaccines is always being monitored. For more information, visit: [www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/)

## 5 What if there is a serious reaction?

### What should I look for?

Look for anything that concerns you, such as signs of a severe allergic reaction, very high fever, or unusual behavior.

Signs of a **severe allergic reaction** can include hives, swelling of the face and throat, difficulty breathing, a fast heartbeat, dizziness, and weakness. These would usually start a few minutes to a few hours after the vaccination.

### What should I do?

If you think it is a severe allergic reaction or other emergency that can't wait, call 9-1-1 or get to the nearest hospital. Otherwise, call your doctor.

Afterward, the reaction should be reported to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS). Your doctor might file this report, or you can do it yourself through the VAERS web site at [www.vaers.hhs.gov](http://www.vaers.hhs.gov), or by calling **1-800-822-7967**.

*VAERS does not give medical advice.*

## 6 How can I learn more?

- Ask your doctor. He or she can give you the vaccine package insert or suggest other sources of information.
- Call your local or state health department.
- Contact the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):
  - Call **1-800-232-4636 (1-800-CDC-INFO)** or
  - Visit CDC's website at [www.cdc.gov/vaccines](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines)

Vaccine Information Statement  
**PPSV Vaccine**

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