

PNEUMOCOCCUS AND ADULTS

Pneumococcus is caused by a type of bacteria called *Streptococcus pneumoniae*.

The Disease

How People Get Sick



Healthy people can have pneumococcal bacteria in the back of their throats.

The lining of the throat can be disrupted by something like:

- Infection
- Smoking
- Drinking alcohol

When a disruption occurs, bacteria from the throat enter the bloodstream and cause infection.

Complications of Pneumococcus

Of 100 people with complications caused by a pneumococcal infection:

36 will have lung infections, like pneumonia, lung abscesses, or pus in area outside of lungs

19 will have meningitis

25 will have sepsis, a type of severe bloodstream infection

20 will have other complications, like joint infections, ear infections or inflammation of the lining of the heart



High-risk individuals are more likely to suffer complications, so they should be vaccinated.

The Vaccines

Two Types:

1. Polysaccharide — Contains the sugar coating (polysaccharide) from 23 types of pneumococcus; called PPSV23.
2. Conjugate — Each polysaccharide is linked (conjugated) to a helper protein; called PCV15, PCV20, or PCV21, based on the number of types it protects against (15, 20, or 21, respectively).

Which Vaccine Do I Need?

Previously unvaccinated adults have two options. They can get PCV20 or PCV21 alone OR PCV15 plus PPSV23 (timing between doses varies; talk to your healthcare provider). Adults who were vaccinated against pneumococcus previously should talk to their healthcare provider about the recommendations and their options.

High-risk individuals include:

- Adults 50 years and older
- People with chronic illnesses, like heart disease, lung disease (including asthma), diabetes, sickle cell or other chronic blood disease, alcoholism, or chronic liver disease (cirrhosis)
- People without a spleen
- People with Hodgkin's disease, malignancy, leukemia, immunodeficiency, lymphoma, multiple myeloma, kidney disease, cochlear implants, or cerebrospinal fluid leaks
- People infected with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)
- People living in high-risk environments or social settings, like nursing homes or long-term care facilities
- People who smoke

