

Pneumococcal Vaccine

Medication Information Leaflet

What Is the Pneumococcal Vaccine Used For?

Pneumococcal vaccines help to prevent pneumococcal disease caused by the bacteria *Streptococcus pneumoniae*.

Pneumococcal disease includes infection of the lungs (pneumonia), ear (otitis media), brain (meningitis), blood (bacteremia) and other serious infections.

Symptoms of pneumococcal disease vary depending on the infected organ. It can range from low-grade fever, cough, earache and chest pain, to more serious symptoms such as confusion or severe headaches.

What Are the Types of Pneumococcal Vaccines Available?

There are 2 types of vaccines available:

1. Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine (PCV13)
2. Pneumococcal Polysaccharide Vaccine (PPSV23)

PCV13 vaccine protects against 13 pneumococcal bacteria strains that most commonly cause pneumococcal disease, while the PPSV23 protects against 23 strains. PCV13 when given before PPSV23, provides extended protection in a selected group of patients, as compared to giving PPSV23 alone.

Who Should Receive the Pneumococcal Vaccine?

All infants should be given two doses of PCV13 (at ages 4 and 6 months), with a booster at 12 months. Children who fall behind should be given catch-up vaccination through to 59 months of age. You may refer to the Singapore National Childhood Immunisation Schedule or ask your child's doctor for more details.

In the elderly aged 65 years and above, one dose each of PCV13 and PPSV23 is recommended.

Please consult your doctor for more details (e.g. on the number of recommended doses and types of vaccine) for the following medical conditions:

- Persons aged 18 years and older with chronic illnesses, such as chronic lung, heart, kidney or liver diseases and diabetes mellitus
- Persons who are immunocompromised (having lower body resistance to infections) or with other medical conditions, such as persons with:
 - Cochlear implants or cerebrospinal fluid leaks;
 - Abnormal spleen function (including conditions such as homozygous sickle cell disease and coeliac syndrome)

What Precautions Should I Follow Before Receiving the Pneumococcal Vaccine?

Inform your healthcare professional if:

- You are allergic to this vaccine or any of the other ingredients of this vaccine
- You have a history of Guillain-Barré Syndrome (a rare nerve condition)
- You are pregnant or breastfeeding

How Is the Pneumococcal Vaccine Given?

It is given by injection into a muscle.

For individuals in which both PCV13 and PPSV23 are recommended, and who have yet to receive any pneumococcal vaccine, PCV13 should be given first, followed by PPSV23 a year later (or at least after a minimum interval of 8 weeks) for better protection.

What Are Some Common Side-Effects of the Pneumococcal Vaccine?

- Some people may feel faint after the vaccination
 - Sit for 15 minutes to avoid fainting
- Soreness, redness, or swelling at the injection site, slight headache, body aches or tiredness; fever of more than 38°C is not common
 - These side effects usually go away on its own within 2 to 3 days
 - You may take Paracetamol to help to relieve the pain or fever

What Are Some Rare but Serious Side-Effects That I Need to Seek Medical Advice Immediately?

Severe allergic reactions (anaphylaxis) are rare and can happen within minutes to a few hours after vaccination.

The symptoms of a severe allergic reaction include one or more of the following:

- Swollen face/eyes/lips/tongue
- Difficulty in breathing
- Itchy skin rashes over your whole body

If you experience any of these symptoms, you should inform your healthcare professional immediately.

Disclaimers

If you take more than the recommended dose, please seek medical advice immediately. The information provided on this page does not replace information from your healthcare professional. Please consult your healthcare professional for more information.

This article is jointly developed by members of the National Medication Information workgroup. The workgroup consists of cluster partners (National Healthcare Group, National University Health System and SingHealth), community pharmacies (Guardian, Unity and Watsons) and Pharmaceutical Society of Singapore.

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