

PNEUMOCOCCAL INFECTION AND VACCINATION

How does pneumococcal infection affect me?

- It is a bacterial infection that can cause infection of the blood, brain, chest or other parts of the body
- Older adults have a higher risk of getting the infection, and of becoming more unwell (or dying) if they are infected
- It causes 1/3 of all chest infections and 1/2 of chest infections in adults needing to go to hospital¹
- About 3 in 10 people who suffer with a pneumococcal brain infection will pass away²

How does the pneumococcal vaccine help?

- The pneumococcal vaccine prevents the more serious illnesses such as blood, brain and chest infections

What are the different pneumococcal vaccines?

- There are 2 main types of pneumococcal vaccines – the brand names are
 - Prevenar 13, Prevenar 20 and Vaxneuvance, and
 - Pneumovax 23.
- Prevenar 13, Prevenar 20 and Vaxneuvance have a “helper” protein that makes the immune system produce a stronger and longer-lasting response after being given the vaccine
- Pneumovax 23 gives protection against additional strains of the bacteria, and is recommended for people at highest risk of the disease (e.g. Indigenous adults, and non-Indigenous adults with certain medical conditions)

When can I get the pneumococcal vaccine?

- 70 years old and older: 1 dose of Prevenar 13, Prevenar 20 or Vaxneuvance. Note that only Prevenar 13 is funded at the moment.
- If you have certain medical conditions or are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, you will also need 2 doses of Pneumovax 23 – please check with your doctor
(first dose of Pneumovax 23 is given 2-12 months after Prevenar 13/Prevenar 20/Vaxneuvance, and second dose is given at least 5 years after the first dose of Pneumovax 23)

¹ <https://immunisationhandbook.health.gov.au/contents/vaccine-preventable-diseases/pneumococcal-disease>

² <https://immunisationhandbook.health.gov.au/resources/tables/table-comparison-of-the-effects-of-diseases-and-the-side-effects-of-vaccines-on-the-national-immunisation-program>

What are common side effects of the pneumococcal vaccine?

- About 1 in 5 people will have swelling, redness or pain at the injection site or low-grade fever – these go away by themselves after 2 - 3 days
- Sometimes a lump develops at the injection site and may last for a few weeks or months – this is of no concern and does not need treatment
- Paracetamol can help with the injection site discomfort and fever

Where can I get more information?

[Pneumococcal vaccines – frequently asked questions \(FAQs\) | NCIRS](#)