

Facts About Pneumonia

What is pneumonia?

Pneumonia is a leading cause of serious illness in children and adults all over the world. The disease is caused by a germ or bacteria that can attack different parts of the body. When bacteria get into the lungs, they cause the most common form of community-acquired bacterial pneumonia. These bacteria may also cause middle ear and sinus infections.

Who is at risk?

Anyone can get pneumonia. The groups most at risk include people age 65 and older; people with weak immune systems due to cancer, leukemia, Hodgkin's disease or HIV; people with sickle cell disease or without a working spleen; people who have a chronic illness such as lung, heart, and kidney disease, diabetes and alcoholism; people living in special communities, such as residents of chronic or long-term care facilities, like nursing homes.

How is pneumonia treated?

Pneumonia is often treated with an antibiotic medicine called penicillin. In recent years, some people have had types of pneumonia not easily treated with some commonly used antibiotics. This type of pneumonia makes treatment difficult and may cause longer hospital stays. This is why it's even more important to get a pneumonia shot today.

Can pneumonia be prevented?

The best way to protect you and your family from pneumonia is by getting a pneumonia shot.

Who should get a pneumonia shot?

A pneumonia shot is recommended for:

- Everyone two years of age and older with chronic medical conditions such as diabetes, chronic lung (except asthma), heart, kidney or liver disease, or alcoholism.
- Those whose immune systems have been weakened by such conditions as cancer or HIV infection.
- People without a working spleen and those with sickle cell disease.
- Residents of chronic care or long-term care facilities.

Who should not get a pneumonia shot?

People who have had an allergic reaction (e.g., hives, difficulty breathing) to their first pneumonia shot **should not get another one**. Also, the **shot should not be given during radiation therapy or chemotherapy**.

The pneumonia shot is **not** recommended for infants and young children under two years of age. ***Ask your doctor if the pneumonia shot is right for you or your children.***

When is the best time to get a pneumonia shot?

Adults can get a pneumonia shot at any time of the year. It can be given at the same time as the fall flu shot. The shot is covered by UnitedHealthcare Community Plan.

How often do you need a pneumonia shot?

Most adults who get the pneumonia shot at age 65 or older only need one shot in their lifetime. But adults who get the shot before age 65, or those at highest risk for pneumonia may need to get another shot.

Can Adults get Pneumonia shot and flu shot at the Same Time?

Yes, the pneumonia shot may be given at the same time as the flu shot. Pneumococcal vaccine can be given at any time during the year. Because the adult groups for whom the pneumonia shot and seasonal flu shot are recommended are similar, the pneumonia shot should be considered at the time of the annual influenza vaccination. Persons who cannot remember if they've ever had pneumococcal vaccine should still be vaccinated.