



# Protect yourself

against pneumonia and meningitis



**NHS**  
SCOTLAND

**Public Health**   
Scotland



Pneumococcal (pronounced new-mo-co-cal) infection is caused by pneumococcal bacteria.

It can cause serious illness, such as bronchitis, pneumonia, septicaemia (a kind of blood poisoning) and meningitis.

# What is **pneumococcal infection?**

In some cases pneumococcal infection can lead to permanent brain damage, or even death.

A pneumococcal infection can affect anyone, but if you're aged 65 or over or have certain long-term health conditions, you are at higher risk of pneumococcal disease. (See page 4 for a list of health conditions.)

For more information about eligible health conditions visit  
**[www.nhsinform.scot/pneumococcalvaccine](http://www.nhsinform.scot/pneumococcalvaccine)**

## **How is pneumococcal infection spread?**

Some adults and children carry pneumococcal bacteria in the back of their nose and throat, and can pass them around by coughing, sneezing and close contact. Usually this does not result in serious illness. But it can lead to pneumococcal infection, including pneumococcal meningitis.

## **How serious is pneumococcal meningitis?**

The majority of people who get pneumococcal meningitis recover, usually without any long-term problems. However, survivors of pneumococcal meningitis are more likely to develop complications than survivors of other bacterial causes of meningitis. These complications include deafness, seizures and long-term brain damage.

## **Who is at risk of pneumococcal infection?**

Children under 2 years of age, people aged 65 or over, and children and adults with certain health conditions have a higher chance of becoming unwell with pneumococcal infection. People aged 65 or over are more likely to suffer serious long-term health problems from pneumococcal infection, and can even die.

# The pneumococcal vaccine

## Who is eligible?

The pneumococcal vaccine is available in Scotland for all people aged 65 years and over. It may also be available if you are aged under 65 (including children) and fall under one of the following risk groups or have one of the following serious medical conditions:

- problems with the spleen, either because the spleen has been removed or does not work properly (asplenia)
- chronic respiratory diseases, including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), chronic bronchitis and emphysema
- serious heart conditions
- severe kidney disease
- long-term liver disease
- diabetes that requires medication
- lowered immunity due to disease or treatment, such as those with HIV, receiving chemotherapy for cancer, or who are on long-term oral steroids for conditions such as asthma
- cochlear implants (a specific hearing device)
- cerebrospinal fluid leaks
- if your job involves exposure to metal fumes (for example, if you are a welder).

For more information about eligible health conditions visit: **[www.nhsinform.scot/pneumococcalvaccine](http://www.nhsinform.scot/pneumococcalvaccine)**

## How many doses will I need?

Most people aged 65 or over only need a single dose of the vaccine, which will help protect them for life.

People with a long-term health condition will either need a one-off single dose or one dose every five years, depending on their underlying health condition. Some children aged 2 years or over with a health condition may also need additional doses.



**If you think you or a child you care for could be eligible for the pneumococcal vaccine, speak to your health professional and arrange an appointment.**



## How safe is the vaccine?

Before they are allowed to be used, all medicines (including vaccines) are tested to assess their safety and effectiveness. Once they have been licensed for use, their safety continues to be monitored.

For more information on vaccine ingredients, and links to the patient information leaflet, visit

**[www.nhsinform.scot/pneumococcalvaccine](http://www.nhsinform.scot/pneumococcalvaccine)**

## How effective is the vaccine?

Getting the vaccine is the best way to help protect yourself against infections caused by the most common types of pneumococcal bacteria. It does not protect you against infections caused by all pneumococcal bacteria, so it's important you know the signs and symptoms of pneumococcal infections.

Visit **[www.nhsinform.scot/pneumococcal-infections](http://www.nhsinform.scot/pneumococcal-infections)** for a full list of signs and symptoms.



## Are there any side effects?

Any side effects are usually mild and disappear within a few days. Some people may get some swelling and soreness around the site of the injection for a few days, or they might get a slight fever (temperature above 37.8°C). Other side effects are very rare. The vaccine does not contain live bacteria and cannot cause an infection.

## Reporting side effects

You can report suspected side effects of vaccines and medicines through the Yellow Card Scheme at **[www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard](http://www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard)**, using the Yellow Card app, or by calling **0800 731 6789** (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday).

This information is a guide only. Always get medical advice from **NHS 24** free on **111** if you're worried about your health.



### Further information

You can visit **[www.nhsinform.scot/pneumococcalvaccine](http://www.nhsinform.scot/pneumococcalvaccine)** for more information. You can also talk to a health professional, or call the NHS inform helpline on **0800 22 44 88** (textphone **18001 0800 22 44 88**). The helpline is open 8 am to 6 pm, Monday to Friday, and also provides an interpreting service.





Translations



Easy read



BSL



Audio



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For more information, or for translations and other formats:



[www.nhsinform.scot/pneumococcalvaccine](http://www.nhsinform.scot/pneumococcalvaccine)



[phs.otherformats@phs.scot](mailto:phs.otherformats@phs.scot)



0131 314 5300

Please visit [www.nhsinform.scot/pneumococcalvaccine](http://www.nhsinform.scot/pneumococcalvaccine)  
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