

# Pneumococcal Disease

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is Pneumococcal Disease?

Pneumococcal disease is a name for any infection caused by the *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, or pneumococcus, bacteria.

### How Does Pneumococcal Disease Spread?

Direct contact through touching the mouth or nose and when coughing and sneezing. A person can spread the bacteria even if they are not showing any signs or symptoms. Anyone can get pneumococcal disease but being a certain age (0 to 4 years old and adults 65 years or older) or having certain health conditions can increase a person's risk.

### What Types of Infection Does Pneumococcus Bacteria Cause?

- Pneumonia (lung infection),
- Meningitis (infection of the lining of the brain and spinal cord),
- Bacteremia (blood infection),
- Otitis media (middle ear infection), and
- Sinusitis (sinus infection).

### What are the Signs and Symptoms of Pneumococcal Disease?

Symptoms depend on the part of the body that is infected.

- **Pneumonia:** Fever and chills, cough, difficulty breathing, and chest pain.
- **Meningitis:** Stiff neck, fever, headache, photophobia, and confusion.
  - In babies, meningitis may cause poor eating and drinking, low alertness, and vomiting.
- **Bacteremia:** Fever, chills, and low alertness.
- **Otitis media:** Ear pain, red and swollen ear drum, fever, and sleepiness.
- **Sinusitis:** Headache, stuffy or runny nose, loss of sense of smell, facial pain or pressure, and postnasal drip.

### How Does a Person Know if They Have Pneumococcal Disease?

Doctors usually diagnose pneumococcal disease with one or more laboratory tests. A blood test is the most common way to diagnose pneumococcal disease.



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### Are There Long-Term Complications with Pneumococcal Disease?

Most pneumococcal infections are mild. However, some can be deadly or result in long-term problems. For example, lung infections can result in blockage of the airway that allows air into the lungs, resulting in difficulty breathing.

### Can a Person Get Pneumococcal Disease More than Once?

Yes, a person can get pneumococcal disease more than once. Vaccines that protect against pneumococcal disease can help the symptoms be less severe if you get it again.

### How Can a Person Prevent Getting Pneumococcal Disease?

Vaccines are the best way to prevent pneumococcal disease.

### Is There a Vaccine to Prevent Pneumococcal Disease?

Yes, two kinds of pneumococcal vaccines are used in the United States to help protect against disease.

### What are the Vaccine Recommendations?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends pneumococcal vaccination for:

- All children 0-4 year old.
- People 5-64 years old, who are at increased risk for disease.
- Adults 65 years or older.

The CDC also recommends vaccination even if someone had pneumococcal disease in the past.



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