

**Pneumowhatal?**



# **Don't let the Pneumococcal bug bite.**

**What to do if you  
are 65 or over.**

**PNEUMOCOCCAL VACCINE**



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Everybody aged 65 and over is now being offered vaccination to help protect them against pneumococcal infection, which can cause severe forms of pneumonia, septicaemia (blood poisoning) and meningitis.

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# Pneumowhatal?

This leaflet describes these diseases and explains how you can protect yourself by getting vaccinated with pneumococcal vaccine.



# Don't let the **Pneumococcal** bug bite.

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## What is pneumococcal disease?

Pneumococcal disease is the term used to describe a range of illnesses such as pneumonia, septicaemia (blood poisoning) and meningitis (inflammation around the brain), when these are caused by the *Streptococcus pneumoniae* bug.

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## How is it spread?

The bugs (bacteria) that cause pneumococcal disease are spread by coughing, sneezing or close contact between people. These bugs get into the nose and throat where they may stay without doing any harm but sometimes they can invade the lungs or bloodstream causing pneumonia and septicaemia or they can reach the brain and cause meningitis.

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## How can it be prevented?

Vaccination with the pneumococcal jab helps prevent severe forms of pneumococcal disease. This vaccine has been used successfully in a number of countries, including the UK where it has been used for more than 10 years.

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## Who is at risk?

Everybody is at risk of getting pneumococcal disease but the risk increases as you get older. People over 65 are particularly vulnerable, especially if they have a heart or lung condition, have diabetes mellitus, have no spleen or have a weakened immune system, for example, if they are having treatment for cancer. Everyone aged 65 and over is therefore now being offered a routine pneumococcal jab.

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## What are the symptoms?

The symptoms of pneumococcal infection of the lungs are:

- **High fever**
- **Coughing**
- **Shaking chills**
- **Breathlessness**
- **Chest pains**
- **Confusion**

and those of pneumococcal meningitis are:

- **Severe headache**
- **Stiff neck**
- **High fever**
- **Confusion**
- **Sensitivity to light**

You should contact your doctor if any of these symptoms is causing you concern.

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## Do I need to do anything to get the jab?

No. Your GP practice makes its own arrangements for giving the jab during October, November and early December. It can be given at the same time as your flu jab. If, by late October, you are not aware of the arrangements for receiving your pneumococcal jab, please contact the surgery.

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## Is it possible to get the disease from the vaccine?

No. You cannot get pneumococcal disease from the vaccine, as it does not contain live bacteria.

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## Will there be side effects?

Side effects are usually mild and short-lived. The most common include swelling and soreness where the injection is given. Very occasionally some people may experience fever or muscle pain.

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## How often will I need this vaccine?

It is currently recommended that most people will only need this once. Re-vaccination is recommended for people with certain conditions, such as

- ***No spleen or problems with their spleen***
- ***Problems with their kidneys***

Talk to your doctor or practice nurse if you think this applies to you.

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## I think I've already had this jab. Do I need another one?

Check with your doctor or practice nurse if you think you've already had the jab. Unless you have one of the conditions above, you shouldn't need another jab.

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## Will people under 65 also be offered the vaccine?

People of any age, who are at a higher risk from infection, such as those with other illnesses and medical conditions, are already recommended to be vaccinated against pneumococcal disease.

These include people with:

- *No spleen or severe dysfunction of the spleen, including homozygous sickle cell disease and coeliac syndrome*
- *Chronic renal disease or nephrotic syndrome*
- *Chronic heart disease*
- *Chronic lung disease*
- *Chronic liver disease including cirrhosis*
- *Diabetes mellitus*
- *Immunodeficiency or immunosuppression due to disease or treatment*
- *HIV infection at all stages.*
- *Cochlear implants*

Talk to your doctor or practice nurse if you think this applies to you.

People over 65 are most at risk from pneumococcal disease all of whom are now being offered a routine vaccination.

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## I'd like to know more

Your doctor, practice nurse or local pharmacy will provide more information on the pneumococcal vaccine or you can call the NHS Helpline free on 0800 22 44 88 (8am - 10pm, 7 days a week) (minicom number 0800 31 71 60).

For more information contact your GP surgery or local pharmacy.

Further copies of this leaflet, including versions on audio tape, in Braille and in larger print, can be obtained from:

**The Scottish Executive Health Department**  
by e-mailing [richard.martin@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:richard.martin@scotland.gsi.gov.uk)  
or faxing **0131 244 2157**.

You can also visit our website at  
[http://www.scotland.gov.uk/health/flu\\_pneumococcal](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/health/flu_pneumococcal)  
which contains versions of this year's flu and pneumococcal leaflets and flu/pneumococcal poster in ethnic languages.

For information on health matters, local health services and how to stay warm and healthy this winter, call the NHS Helpline free on **0800 22 44 88**,  
8am - 10pm, 7 days a week  
(minicom number **0800 31 71 60**)

