

Pneumococcal conjugate (PCV 20) vaccine

**Keep your child safe.
Get all vaccines on time.**

By getting all the vaccines on time, your child can be protected from many diseases over a lifetime.

Immunization has saved more lives in Canada in the last 50 years than any other health measure.

What is the PCV 20 vaccine?

The PCV 20 vaccine protects against 20 types of pneumococcal bacteria. The vaccine is approved by Health Canada.

The vaccine is free as part of your child's routine immunizations. It is also free for people at high risk of getting sick from pneumococcal infection. Speak with your health care provider to make an appointment.

Who should get the vaccine?

Babies receive the vaccine as a series of 3 doses at 2, 4 and 12 months of age. Babies with certain health conditions should get an extra dose of vaccine at 6 months of age.

The vaccine is also recommended for:

- Adults 65 years of age and older
- Residents of long-term care and assisted living facilities

People with any of the following:

- No spleen or a spleen that is not working properly
- Sickle-cell disease
- An immune system weakened by disease or medical treatment
- Chronic liver disease, including cirrhosis and chronic hepatitis B

- Hepatitis C, including those who had it in the past
- Chronic kidney, heart or lung disease
- An islet cell or solid organ transplant, or a cochlear (inner ear) implant, or are waiting for one
- Had a stem cell transplant or chimeric antigen receptor T-cell therapy
- A chronic neurological condition that makes it hard to clear fluids from the mouth or throat
- Diabetes, cystic fibrosis or a chronic cerebrospinal fluid leak
- Experiencing homelessness or are underhoused
- Substance use disorders (alcohol, cocaine, injection drug use)

People who are not eligible for the free vaccine but want to be protected can purchase the vaccine at most pharmacies and travel clinics. It is important to keep a record of all immunizations received.

What are the benefits of the vaccine?

The vaccine protects against pneumococcal infection, a serious and sometimes fatal disease. When you get immunized, you help protect others as well.

What are the possible reactions after the vaccine?

Vaccines are very safe. It is much safer to get the vaccine than to get pneumococcal disease.

Common reactions to the vaccine include soreness, redness and swelling at the injection site. Some people may have fever, headache, muscle or joint ache, and fatigue. Infants and toddlers may have loss of appetite, changes to their sleep patterns, crankiness, vomiting,

diarrhea or a rash. These reactions are mild and generally go away in 1 to 2 days.

Acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol®) or ibuprofen* (e.g. Advil®) can be given for fever or soreness. ASA (e.g. Aspirin®) should not be given to anyone under 18 years of age due to the risk of Reye syndrome.

*Ibuprofen should not be given to children under 6 months of age without first speaking to your health care provider.

For more information on Reye syndrome, please visit [HealthLinkBC File #84 Reye syndrome](#).

It is important to stay in the clinic for 15 minutes after getting any vaccine. There is an extremely rare possibility of a life-threatening allergic reaction called anaphylaxis. This happens in less than 1 in a million people who get the vaccine. Symptoms may include hives, difficulty breathing, or swelling of the throat, tongue or lips. If this reaction occurs, your health care provider is prepared to treat it. Emergency treatment includes administration of epinephrine (adrenaline) and transfer by ambulance to the nearest emergency department. If symptoms develop after you leave the clinic, call **9-1-1** or the local emergency number.

Always report serious or unexpected reactions to your health care provider.

Who should not get the vaccine?

Speak with your health care provider if you or your child has had a life-threatening reaction to a previous dose of pneumococcal vaccine or any part of the vaccine.

There is no need to delay getting immunized because of a cold or other mild illness. If you have concerns, speak with your health care provider.

What is pneumococcal infection?

Pneumococcal infection is caused by *Streptococcus pneumoniae* bacteria. The bacteria can cause serious and life-threatening infections of the lining that covers the brain (meningitis), the blood (septicemia) and the lungs (pneumonia). Permanent complications of meningitis include brain damage and deafness. For every 20 cases of pneumococcal meningitis, up to 5 people will die.

Pneumococcal infection is spread from one person to another by coughing, sneezing or close face-to-face contact. It can also spread through saliva. For example, by kissing or sharing food, drinks or cigarettes. Babies and children can get sick by sharing soothers, bottles or toys with other children.

Pneumococcal disease is rare among children in B.C. because of routine childhood immunization programs.

Mature minor consent

It is recommended that parents or guardians and their children discuss consent for immunization. Children under the age of 19, who are able to understand the benefits and possible reactions for each vaccine and the risk of not getting immunized, can legally consent to or refuse immunizations. For more information on mature minor consent, visit [HealthLinkBC File #119 The Infants Act, mature minor consent and immunization](#).



BC Centre for Disease Control
Provincial Health Services Authority

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