



Mae Brechu yn achub bywydau
Vaccination saves lives



Get vaccinated against pneumococcal disease

**Information for older adults
and people at risk**

Mae'r wybodaeth hon ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This information is available in Welsh.



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Scan me for more
information on
pneumococcal
disease

IMM214A

Key facts

You say
pneumococcal
like this:
'new-mow-cock-al'.

Fact!
Pneumococcal
infections are more
common in winter.

Pneumococcal disease is the name for a group of infections caused by a germ called pneumococcus. These infections can be mild, like sinus or ear infections, but some are very serious and can lead to:

- **Pneumonia** – an infection in your lungs.
- **Sepsis** – a life-threatening reaction to an infection that can harm your whole body.
- **Meningitis** – swelling around your brain and spinal cord, which can cause long-term health problems or death.

You or your child may be at higher risk of getting seriously ill from pneumococcal disease if you are:

- Aged 65 or over.
- Aged two years or older and have a certain long-term health condition.
- Regularly exposed to metal fumes at work.
- Experiencing homelessness.

The pneumococcal vaccine is safe. It meets all safety standards. Once a vaccine is in use, its safety continues to be monitored.

You can help protect yourself or your child by having the pneumococcal vaccine. Contact your GP to check if you are eligible.



How do pneumococcal infections spread?

The germs that cause pneumococcal infections spread easily through coughs and sneezes. They can also spread through close contact with spit or mucus.

Who should have the pneumococcal vaccine?

Anyone can get a pneumococcal infection, but some people can become very ill if they get it.

You or your child should have the vaccine - even if you feel healthy - if you are aged:

- 65 or over, or
- Two years or over with a long-term health condition, including:
 - A long-term heart problem that needs regular medicine or treatment. For example, heart failure or heart disease.
 - A long-term chest or breathing problem. Examples include chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) or severe asthma that needs regular steroids.
 - Diabetes (if medicine is taken for it).

- Long-term kidney or liver disease.
- A weak immune system. This may be due to a genetic condition, complement disorder, illness such as HIV, or treatment such as chemotherapy or steroids.
- A cerebrospinal fluid leak (fluid around the brain and spine leaking due to injury or surgery).
- No spleen, or a spleen that does not work properly. This includes people with coeliac disease that affects the spleen. It also includes those with blood conditions like sickle cell disease.
- A cochlear implant (a type of hearing device).

This is not a full list. If you have a long-term health condition and are not sure whether you or your child should get the vaccine, contact your GP.

You are also at higher risk of becoming seriously ill and should have the vaccine if you do not have a permanent place to live. For example, if you are:

- sleeping rough
- staying in emergency accommodation (e.g., hostel or shelter), or
- recently homeless and in supported accommodation.

You should also get the vaccine if you work in a job where you regularly breathe in metal fumes. For example, if you work as a welder. Contact your employer or GP surgery.

Pneumococcal vaccination for babies under two years

All babies are routinely offered the pneumococcal vaccine at:



16 weeks of age, and



12 months of age.

The vaccine is given as an injection into your baby's thigh.

Some babies at higher risk may need extra pneumococcal vaccines. For example, those with:

- No spleen, or a spleen that does not work properly.
- A very weak immune system. This may be due to a genetic condition, complement disorder, or treatment such as chemotherapy or steroids.

If you are not sure if your baby needs these extra vaccines, talk to their specialist doctor or nurse.

How many doses do I need?

Most people over the age of 65 and people with certain health conditions only need **one** dose of the vaccine. This is given as an injection in the upper arm.

A few people at risk may need further doses. This includes people who have:

- Chronic (long-term) kidney disease
- No spleen, or a spleen that does not work properly.
- A very weak immune system. This may be due to a genetic condition, complement disorder, or treatment such as chemotherapy or steroids.

If you are not sure how many doses you need, ask your doctor or nurse.





Can the pneumococcal vaccine be given at the same time as other vaccines?

Yes, the pneumococcal vaccine can be given at the same time as most other vaccines. The person giving you or your child the vaccine will let you know which vaccines can be given together.

Can you still get pneumococcal disease after vaccination?

Vaccination is one of the best ways to help prevent severe illness caused by pneumococcal disease. No vaccine is 100% effective. Therefore, it is still important to know the signs and symptoms of pneumococcal disease, even if you or your child have been vaccinated.

For more information about the symptoms of pneumonia, sepsis and meningitis, go to:

NHS 111 Wales - Health A-Z: Pneumonia
(external site)

NHS 111 Wales - Health A-Z: Sepsis
(external site)

NHS 111 Wales - Health A-Z: Meningitis
(external site)

Fact!

The pneumococcal vaccine cannot cause or spread pneumococcal disease.

Is there anyone who should not have the vaccine?

Very few people cannot have the pneumococcal vaccination. You or your child should not have the vaccine if you have had a serious (life-threatening) reaction to:

- a previous dose of the same vaccine, or
- any ingredient in the vaccine.

Speak to the person giving you or your child the vaccine if you have had a serious allergic reaction to the vaccine or its ingredients in the past.

If I am unwell, should I have the vaccine?

A cold or other minor illness is not a reason to delay your vaccine.

If you or your child have a high temperature (fever) above 38.5C, wait until you are better to have the vaccine. However, you should try to have it as soon as possible. If you cannot attend your vaccination appointment, please cancel it and make a new one.

What if I have a fear of needles?

If you or your child have a fear of needles, let the person giving the vaccine know. They will support you.

Are there any side effects from the vaccine?

Like all medicines, vaccines can cause side effects, but not everyone gets them. Most side effects are mild and may last a day or two. The most common side effects include:

- Soreness, redness, swelling, warmth or hardening where the injection was given
- Fever
- Headache
- Joint or muscle pain
- Tiredness

In addition to this, side effects in children may include:

- A change in eating habits
- Irritability
- Drowsiness or more sleep than usual

Rarely, people can have a severe reaction soon after the vaccination. This can cause breathing difficulties and they may collapse. This is called an anaphylactic reaction, and it can also happen with other medicines and food. These reactions are extremely rare, affecting less than one in a million people. Staff who give vaccinations are trained to manage these reactions.

People who have an anaphylactic reaction can be successfully treated. They usually recover within a few hours.

See the back page of this leaflet for further details on:

- your vaccine, including all possible side effects, and
- reporting suspected side effects through the Yellow Card scheme.

If you have any questions about side effects, you can ask the person giving you or your child the vaccine.



How will I get my vaccine?

Your GP surgery should get in touch with you to make an appointment when you or your child are eligible. If you think you might have missed the invitation, speak to your GP surgery.

Fact!

You can have the pneumococcal vaccine at any time of the year

Use the table below to record your pneumococcal vaccine.

Name of vaccine	Date given
Pneumococcal vaccine	

The information in this leaflet is correct at the time of publication. For the most up-to-date information, please visit **phw.nhs.wales/vaccines**



Further information

If you have any questions or want more information, you can go to **111.wales.nhs.uk** (external site). You can also talk to your doctor or nurse, or contact NHS 111 Wales by calling **111**.

You can find out more information on vaccines offered in Wales at **phw.nhs.wales/vaccines**

To find out more about the vaccine, including its contents and possible side effects, go to **medicines.org.uk/emc** (external site) or **products.mhra.gov.uk** (external site). You will need to enter the name of the vaccine in the search box. You can also see the patient leaflet online.

You can find the name of the vaccine at **phw.nhs.wales/pneumococcal-older-adults-risk-groups**

You should report suspected side effects online at **www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard** (external site). You can also download the Yellow Card app, or call **0800 731 6789** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm).

To find out how the NHS uses your information, go to **111.wales.nhs.uk/AboutUs/Yourinformation** (external site).



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