



Pneumococcal vaccine

for children under two years

This leaflet tells you about pneumococcal infection and the pneumococcal vaccine for babies.

What is pneumococcal infection?

Pneumococcal infection is one of the most common causes of meningitis (an infection of the lining of the brain). It also causes ear infections (otitis media), pneumonia (infection of the lungs) and some other serious illnesses. The pneumococcal vaccine given to children (known as PCV) provides good protection against pneumococcal infection. Up to 60% of children carry pneumococcal bacteria in the back of their nose and throat. They easily pass these bacteria on to others by coughing, sneezing and close contact.

This vaccine does not protect against meningitis caused by other bacteria or viruses, so you still need to know the signs and symptoms to look out for.

Symptoms may appear in any order and some may not appear at all. See below for symptoms.

Babies and toddlers

- Fever, cold hands and feet
- Refusing food and vomiting
- Fretful, dislike being handled
- Drowsy, floppy, unresponsive
- Rapid breathing or grunting
- Spots or rash (see glass test)
- Unusual cry, moaning
- Tense bulging fontanelle (soft spot)
- Stiff neck, dislike bright lights
- Convulsions or seizures

What should I do if I suspect meningitis?

If your child is ill and getting worse, do not wait for a rash as symptoms can appear in any order and some may not appear at all, so get medical help urgently. If you can't get in touch with your doctor, or are still worried after getting advice, trust your instincts and go to the emergency department of your nearest hospital.

The glass test for meningitis

A rash that does not fade under pressure is a sign of meningococcal septicaemia (blood poisoning).

- Press the side of a clear glass firmly against the skin.
- Spots or a rash (or both) may fade at first.
- Keep checking.
- Fever with spots or a rash (or both) that do not fade under pressure is a medical emergency.
- If your child is ill and getting worse, get medical help immediately.
- On dark skin, the spots or rash can be more difficult to see.

When is the pneumococcal vaccine offered?

Children are offered the pneumococcal vaccine alongside their other routine childhood vaccinations when they are three months old and again at 12 to 13 months for longer-term protection.

How will I know when my child's vaccinations are due?

Children are sent an appointment for their routine pneumococcal vaccine at the appropriate age. Most GP surgeries and health centres run special vaccination or baby clinics.

What happens at the appointment?

The nurse or doctor will explain about the vaccinations and answer your questions. With babies, the vaccine is given by injection into the thigh. In children over 12 months old, injections are usually given into the upper arm.

Can the vaccine be given if my child is unwell on the day of the appointment?

If your child has a minor illness without a fever, such as a cold, they should have their vaccinations as normal. If your child is ill with a fever on the day the vaccination is due, delay the vaccination until they have recovered.

Are there any children who should not have the vaccine?

There are very few reasons why children cannot be vaccinated. Pneumococcal vaccine should not be given to children who have had a severe (life-threatening) reaction to a previous dose of the vaccine or any ingredient in the vaccine.

If your child:

- has a bleeding disorder (for example haemophilia, where their blood does not clot properly), or
- has had a fit not caused by a fever,

speak to your doctor, practice nurse or health visitor before your child has any vaccination.

What if I miss the appointment?

You should cancel an appointment if you can't make it. If you do miss the appointment or have to delay the vaccination, make a new appointment as soon as possible. If your child is under two, pneumococcal vaccine can still be given, but your child will be without protection for longer.

Remember, it's important to catch up on most missed vaccinations. If your child has missed a vaccination and is older than the recommended age, talk to your GP, practice nurse or health visitor.

Does the vaccine have any side effects?

Millions of doses of the vaccine have been given and it has a very good safety record. Children can sometimes get a sore leg or arm where the injection was given. Some may develop a small lump where the needle was put in. This is normal and may last some weeks. It does not need any treatment. They may also get a raised temperature (fever), seem unsettled and may not want to feed much.

If your child has a raised temperature and seems unwell, you can give them paracetamol liquid. Read the instructions on the bottle carefully and give your child the correct strength and dose for their age.

If you are worried about your child after the vaccination you should speak to your health visitor, doctor or practice nurse.

You can report suspected side effects of vaccines and medicines through the Yellow Card scheme. Go online to yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk or call the Yellow Card line on 0800 731 6789. This is a Freephone number and is open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

Where can I get more information?

If you have any questions or want more information, you can visit **111.wales.nhs.uk**, talk to your doctor or nurse or call **NHS 111 Wales**.

You can find out more about the vaccine, including its contents and possible side effects at **www.medicines.org.uk/emc**. You will need to enter the name of the vaccine (Prevenar 13) in the search box. You can also see the patient leaflet online.

The routine vaccination schedule that shows you which vaccinations are offered in Wales is available from **111.wales.nhs.uk/CompleteSchedule**

To order more copies of this leaflet, visit: **www.publichealthwales.org/HealthInformationResources**

To find out how the NHS uses your information, visit: **111.wales.nhs.uk/AboutUs/Yourinformation**