

PNEUMOCOCCAL INFECTION FACT SHEET

What is a pneumococcal infection?

Pneumococcal is a contagious infection caused by *Streptococcus pneumoniae* bacteria ("pneumococcus"). These bacteria can cause many types of illnesses, including: pneumonia (infection of the lungs), ear infections, sinus infections, meningitis (infection of the covering around the brain and spinal cord), and bacteremia (blood stream infection).

How is pneumococcal infection spread?

Pneumococcal infection is spread through coughing, sneezing, and close contact with an infected person.

What are the symptoms of a pneumococcal infection?

Symptoms of pneumococcal disease depend on the part of the body that is infected. They can include fever, cough, shortness of breath, chest pain, stiff neck, confusion and disorientation, sensitivity to light, joint pain, chills, ear pain, sleeplessness, and irritability. In severe cases, pneumococcal disease can cause brain damage, hearing loss, the loss of arms or legs, and death.

Who gets a pneumococcal infection?

Certain people are more likely to become ill with pneumococcal infection. This high-risk group includes adults 65 years of age or older and children younger than 25 years of age. People who have conditions that weaken the immune system, like diabetes, heart disease, lung disease, and HIV/AIDS, or people who smoke cigarettes or have asthma are also at increased risk for getting pneumococcal disease.

Is there treatment for a pneumococcal infection?

Yes, antibiotics may be prescribed.

How can pneumococcal infections be prevented?

Get a pneumococcal vaccine and practice good hygiene and cleanliness:

- Wash your hands often.
- If soap and water aren't available, clean hands with hand sanitizer (containing at least 60% alcohol).
- Don't touch your eyes, nose, or mouth. If you need to touch your face, make sure your hands are clean.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing.
- Try to avoid close contact, such as kissing, hugging, or sharing eating utensils or cups, with people who are sick.

For vaccination information:

<http://www.cdc.gov/VACCINES/vpd-vac/pneumo/default.htm>

For more information please contact Contra Costa Public Health at 925-313-6740 and visit our website at <http://cchealth.org/cd/>