

Pneumococcal vaccine for people at risk

The pneumococcal vaccine is also known as the pneumonia vaccine. It protects against pneumococcal disease.

Pneumococcal disease can lead to:

- [pneumonia](#)
- [sepsis](#)
- [meningitis](#)

Important

This vaccine for people at risk of pneumococcal disease is called the PPV23 vaccine. There is a separate [pneumococcal vaccine for young children](#).

The vaccine is available for free through your GP if you are:

- 65 years or older
- aged 2 or over and in an at-risk group

The consultation is free if you have a medical card or GP visit card.

Getting other vaccines

You can get the pneumococcal vaccine at the same time as the flu vaccine or COVID-19 vaccine.

Who should get the vaccine

You should get the pneumococcal vaccine if you are:

- age 65 and over
- aged 2 or over and at higher risk of getting seriously ill

► [Who is at higher risk of getting seriously ill](#)

Who should not get the pneumococcal vaccine

The vaccine is safe for most people.

The PPV23 vaccine is not recommended for healthy children and younger adults, as they are at low risk of pneumococcal disease.

Do not get this vaccine if you have had an allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to a previous dose of the vaccine or to any ingredient in the vaccine.

If you or your child have a high temperature or feel too unwell to do your normal activities, wait until you're feeling better before having the vaccine.

How often to get the pneumococcal vaccine

If you are age 65 years or older, you only need to get the vaccine once.

If you are younger than 65 years, you may need to have 2 doses of the vaccine at least 5 years apart.

Ask your GP about getting the vaccine.

Side effects of the pneumococcal vaccine

The pneumococcal vaccine may cause mild side effects.

The most common side effects are:

- pain
- redness on some skin tones
- swelling where the injection was given
- headaches
- tiredness
- muscle aches

Severe allergic reactions are very rare. No other serious side effects have been reported for the vaccine.

You cannot get pneumococcal disease from the vaccine as it does not contain live bacteria.

How the pneumococcal vaccine works

The vaccine stimulates the body to make antibodies against the pneumococcal bacteria.

If you come into contact with the bacteria, these antibodies will fight the infection.

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