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Pneumococcal vaccine for children under two years



This leaflet tells you about pneumococcal infection
and the pneumococcal vaccine



What is pneumococcal infection?

Pneumococcal infection is one of the most common causes of meningitis (an infection of the lining on 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:

Babies and Toddlers



© Meningitis Now

What should I do if I suspect meningitis?

If your child develops one or more of the symptoms described above, 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 take your child to the emergency department of your nearest hospital.

The 'glass' test

Press the side of a drinking glass firmly against the rash so you can see if the rash fades and loses colour under pressure. If it doesn't change colour and your child is unwell, contact your doctor immediately.



When is the Pneumococcal vaccine (PCV) offered?

Children are offered the pneumococcal vaccine when they are aged 2 and 4 months of age and again at 12-13 months for longer term protection.

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

Children are sent an appointment to attend for their routine pneumococcal (PCV) vaccine at the appropriate age. Most surgeries and health centres run special immunisation or baby clinics.

What happens at the appointment?

The nurse or doctor will explain about the immunisations 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 a child has a minor illness without a fever, such as a cold, they should have their immunisations as normal. If a child is ill with a fever on the day the immunisation is due, delay the immunisations until recovered.

Are there any children who should not have the vaccine?

There are very few reasons why children cannot be immunised. 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, in which the child's blood does not clot properly), or
- has had a fit not associated with fever

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

My baby was born early. When should premature babies have their vaccine?

Babies born early may be at more risk of getting an infection. They should start their vaccines two months after they were born, no matter how early they were born.



What if I miss the appointment?

You should cancel an appointment in advance if you can't make it. If you do miss the appointment or have to delay the immunisation, make a new appointment as soon as possible. If your child is under the age of two years 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 immunisations. If your child has missed an immunisation 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 used 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) over 37.5°C, seem unsettled and may not want to eat much.

If your child has a raised temperature and appears unwell they can be given 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 immunisation you should speak to your health visitor, doctor or practice nurse or call NHS Direct Wales on **0845 4647** or visit **www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/**

Members of the public can report suspected side effects of vaccines and medicines through the Yellow Card scheme. This can be done by visiting **www.yellowcard.gov.uk** or by calling the Yellow Card hotline on **0808 100 3352** (available Monday to Friday, 10:00 – 14:00).



Where can I get more information?

You can find out more about the vaccines used including vaccine contents and potential side effects at www.medicines.org.uk/emc/



by entering the name of the vaccine in the search box and looking at the patient information leaflet (PIL). The vaccine currently used is Prevenar®13.

The routine immunisation schedule that shows you which immunisations are offered in Wales is available from www.publichealthwales.org/routine-immunisation-schedule-wales

If you have any questions or want more information, talk to your doctor or nurse or call NHS Direct Wales on **0845 4647** or visit www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/



To order more copies of this leaflet, email: hplibrary@wales.nhs.uk or telephone **08456 064050**.

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