

Protecting Yourself with Pneumococcal Vaccines



What immunocompromised* people should know.

What is pneumococcal disease?

Pneumococcal disease is caused by a bacteria that spreads through sneezing, coughing, saliva, and mucus. It is a common infection in both children and adults.¹ The bacteria can infect different parts of the body, leading to a range of illnesses—like ear infections and sinusitis, to severe pneumonia and sepsis.

Invasive pneumococcal disease (IPD)

People with weakened immune systems are at particularly high risk of the more serious type of pneumococcal disease, called invasive pneumococcal disease (IPD).²

This can include:

- Pneumonia – lung infection
- Meningitis – infection of the brain and spinal cord
- Bacteremia – blood infection caused by bacteria entering the bloodstream, which can spread to other organs and tissues
- Sepsis – a system-wide reaction to an infection that can cause life-threatening damage to organs and tissues
- Bone and joint infections

What are the symptoms?

The most common IPD is pneumococcal pneumonia.

Symptoms include:

- Cough
- Breathing trouble
- Chest pain
- Fever

Symptoms of other IPDs (e.g., meningitis, bacteremia) may include:

- Headache
- Sensitivity to light
- Chills
- Confusion
- Rapid heart rate

How is IPD treated?

IPD is treated by a healthcare provider—usually with antibiotics to fight the infection and medications to help manage symptoms, such as fever and pain.

If you have symptoms, seek medical care right away.



IPD is very serious and can cause long-term health outcomes (e.g., hearing loss, neurological issues, organ damage) and in some cases, even death.

✓ Protecting against pneumococcal disease

It is recommended that immunocompromised adults¹ receive one of the approved pneumococcal conjugate vaccines to prevent pneumococcal infections^{3,4}.

If you're unsure which pneumococcal vaccine is right for you, talk to a healthcare provider to make a plan that fits your health history.



Did you know?

The bacteria that causes pneumococcal disease is called streptococcus pneumoniae. Many people can carry this bacteria in their nose or throat and spread it to others without knowing or having symptoms.

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When to act?

Quick diagnosis is key in preventing more serious complications, like bone and joint infections, and pneumonia.

If you develop a persistent fever, chest pain, and/or shortness of breath, call your healthcare provider right away.



Protect yourself from pneumococcal disease.

Talk to your healthcare provider about getting vaccinated.

How can I access the pneumococcal vaccine?

All provinces and territories have a publicly funded pneumococcal vaccine program. All programs offer the vaccine for free to people who are:

- Older than 65
- Younger than 65 and at risk for IPD due to immune-compromising conditions

Find the most up-to-date information about your region's program, including where you can go to get the vaccine below:

- [Alberta](#)
- [British Columbia](#)
- [Manitoba](#)
- [New Brunswick](#)
- [Newfoundland & Labrador](#)
- [Northwest Territories](#)
- [Nunavut](#)
- [Nova Scotia](#)
- [Ontario](#)
- [Prince Edward Island](#)
- [Quebec](#)
- [Yukon](#)

Vaccines are an important tool and they work best when combined with other strategies, like masking, ventilation, and staying home when sick.

Wear a high quality and well-fitting mask (e.g., N95 or equivalent) for added protection against pneumococcal and other illnesses.⁵



References

*Immunocompromised is a term used to describe a weakened immune system that can be caused by a variety of medical conditions and drug treatments

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3. Public Health Agency of Canada. Recommendations on the use of pneumococcal vaccines in adults, including PNEU-C-21 [Internet]. Canada.ca. 2025. Available from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/vaccines-immunization/national-advisory-committee-immunization-statement-recommendations-use-pneumococcal-vaccines-adults-pneu-c-21.html#a5.4>
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5. CCHST. Appareils respiratoires - Les appareils de protection respiratoire par rapport aux masques chirurgicaux et aux masques non médicaux [Internet]. Available from: https://www.cchst.ca/oshanswers/prevention/ppe/surgical_mask.pdf

This resource was developed in January 2026 and reflects information available at that time.



This resource was developed in partnership with people who have lived experience.

immunocompromised.ca

