

Published on *SeniorNavigator* (<https://seniornavigator.org>)

Pneumonia Can Be Prevented - Vaccines Can Help

[Español \(Spanish\)](#)

Pneumonia, an infection of the lungs, needlessly affects millions of people worldwide each year. Pneumonia can often be prevented and can usually be treated. Lower your risk of pneumonia with vaccines and other healthy living practices.

Each year in the United States, more than 250,000 people have to seek care in a hospital due to pneumonia. Unfortunately, about 50,000 people die from the disease each year in the United States. Most of the people affected by pneumonia in the United States are adults. Vaccines and appropriate treatment (like antibiotics and antivirals) could prevent many of these deaths.

Lower Your Risk with Vaccines

In the United States, vaccines can help prevent infection by some of the bacteria and viruses that can cause pneumonia:

- [Haemophilus influenzae type b \(Hib\)](#)
- [Influenza \(flu\)](#)
- [Measles](#)
- [Pertussis \(whooping cough\)](#)
- [Pneumococcal](#)
- [Varicella \(chickenpox\)](#)

These vaccines are safe, but side effects can occur. Most side effects are mild and go away on their own within a few days. See the [vaccine information statements](#) for each vaccine to learn more about the most common side effects.

Encourage friends and loved ones to make sure they are up to date with their vaccines.

[World Pneumonia Day](#) is observed each year on November 12th. Globally, pneumonia kills nearly 1 million children younger than 5 years old each year. This is greater than the number of deaths from any infectious disease, such as HIV infection, malaria, or tuberculosis.

Protect Your Health with These Healthy Living Practices

Try to stay away from sick people. If you are sick, stay away from others as much as possible to keep from getting them sick. You can also help prevent respiratory infections by:

- Washing your hands regularly
- Cleaning surfaces that are touched a lot
- Coughing or sneezing into a tissue or into your elbow or sleeve
- Limiting contact with cigarette smoke or quitting smoking
- Managing ongoing medical conditions (like asthma, diabetes, or heart disease)

Pneumonia Affects the Young and Old

Pneumonia is an infection of the lungs that can cause mild to severe illness in people of all ages. Common signs of pneumonia can include cough, fever, and trouble breathing.

Some People Are More Likely to Get Pneumonia

Certain people are more likely to get pneumonia:

- Adults 65 years or older
- Children younger than 5 years old
- People who have ongoing medical conditions
- People who smoke cigarettes

Causes and Types of Pneumonia

Viruses, bacteria, and fungi can all cause pneumonia. In the United States, common causes of viral pneumonia are influenza and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). A common cause of bacterial pneumonia is *Streptococcus pneumoniae* (pneumococcus). However, clinicians are not always able to find out which germ caused someone to get sick with pneumonia.

Community-acquired pneumonia is when someone develops pneumonia in the community (not in a hospital). Healthcare-associated pneumonia is when someone develops pneumonia during or following a stay in a healthcare facility. Healthcare facilities include hospitals, long-term care facilities, and dialysis centers. Ventilator-associated pneumonia is when someone gets pneumonia after being on a ventilator, a machine that supports breathing. The bacteria and viruses that most commonly cause pneumonia in the community are different from those in healthcare settings.

See [causes of pneumonia](#).

Pneumococcal Recommendations for Older Adults

There are two vaccines that help prevent pneumococcal disease among adults 65 years or older. Both vaccines are safe and effective, but they cannot be given at the same time

Two vaccines offer protection against pneumococcal disease: PCV13 and PPSV23.

Pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine (PPSV23)

CDC recommends all adults 65 years or older get a shot of PPSV23.

Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV13)

CDC recommends adults 65 years or older get a shot of PCV13 if they have never received a dose and have a:

- Condition that weakens the immune system
- Cerebrospinal fluid leak

- Cochlear implant

Older adults who have never received a dose and do not have one of the conditions described above may also discuss vaccination with their vaccine provider to decide if PCV13 is appropriate for them.

If you are recommended to or want to receive both vaccines:

- Get PCV13 first. Talk to your doctor about when to come back to get PPSV23.
- If you've already received PPSV23, wait at least a year after that shot before you get PCV13.

Article Source

Centers for Disease Control (CDC)

Source URL

<https://www.cdc.gov>

Last Reviewed

Tuesday, July 28, 2020