

Pneumococcal vaccine

Catch-up programme
for children under
two years of age



immunisation

the safest way to protect your child

Pneumococcal vaccine

From September 2006, pneumococcal (pronounced new-mo-cock-al) conjugate vaccine (PCV) is being introduced into the routine childhood immunisation programme at two, four and 15 months of age to protect children from pneumococcal infection. This means that there is a large group of children under two who will be unprotected as they will already have had their primary immunisations without PCV. A catch-up programme is therefore being provided to protect these children. This leaflet briefly describes the disease and the programme.

What is pneumococcal infection?

Pneumococcal infection can cause pneumonia, septicaemia (blood poisoning) and meningitis. Children under two years of age are particularly at risk from this infection. The UK's routine immunisation programme now offers protection against this infection.

Because your child is under two, he or she is being offered this vaccine (PCV). Children aged one year or over when they are called for vaccination will only need one dose of the vaccine. Children under one year will be offered two doses, with a routine booster when they are 15 months old.

Do I need to do anything to get my child vaccinated?

No. Your local surgery or child health department will send you an appointment to bring your child for the PCV vaccine.

Can my child get pneumococcal disease from the vaccination?

No. PCV is not a live vaccine so there is no risk of your child getting pneumococcal infection from the vaccination.

Will there be any side effects from the vaccine?

There are no known serious side effects of PCV vaccine. There may be some swelling or redness where the injection is given – this usually lasts no longer than 24 hours. Your child may have a slight temperature and be a little unwell. If this happens, give your child plenty of cool drinks and some paracetamol or ibuprofen liquid. Always read the instructions on the bottle carefully and give the correct dose for the age of your child. This is especially important for ibuprofen liquid, where some dosages are only appropriate for children at certain ages and weights.

Remember, never give medicines that contain aspirin to children under 16.

Are there any reasons why my child shouldn't have PCV?

There are very few reasons why your child should not have PCV vaccine. You should let your health visitor, GP or practice nurse know if your child:

- has a very high temperature or fever;
- has had a bad reaction to any immunisation;
- has a severe allergy to anything;
- has a bleeding disorder;
- has had convulsions or fits;
- has had treatment for cancer;
- has any illness that affects the immune system (eg leukaemia, HIV or AIDS);
- is taking any medicine that affects the immune system (eg high dose steroids or treatments given after organ transplant or for cancers);
- has any other serious illness.

These don't always mean that your child can't be immunised, but it helps the doctor or nurse decide which are the best immunisations for your child and if they need to give you any other advice. A family history of illness is never a reason for a child not to be immunised.

Where can I get more information about PCV?

If you want further information about PCV, please visit

www.immunisation.nhs.uk or www.dhsspsni.org.uk/phealth

or speak to your health visitor, practice nurse or doctor, or get the leaflet *Immunisation for babies up to 15 months of age* from your doctor's surgery or clinic.



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