

Invasive Pneumococcal Disease Fact Sheet

What is invasive pneumococcal disease?

Severe pneumococcal disease is a severe bacterial infection caused by *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, also called pneumococcus. It may cause pneumonia, meningitis or a blood stream infection (bacteremia).

Who gets invasive pneumococcal disease?

Although anyone can get invasive pneumococcal disease, it occurs more frequently in infants, young children, African Americans, some Native American populations, the elderly or in people with serious underlying medical conditions such as chronic lung, heart or kidney disease. Others at risk include alcoholics, diabetics, people with weakened immune systems and those without a spleen.

How is the disease transmitted?

The pneumococcus is spread by airborne or direct exposure to respiratory droplets from a person who is infected or carrying the bacteria.

When does invasive pneumococcal disease occur?

Infections occur most often during the winter and early spring when respiratory illnesses are more common.

How soon after exposure do symptoms occur?

The incubation period may vary but it is generally one to three days.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms generally include an abrupt onset of fever and shaking or chills. Other common symptoms may include headache, cough, chest pain, disorientation, shortness of breath weakness and occasionally stiff neck.

How is invasive pneumococcal disease diagnosed?

Doctors are able to diagnose pneumococcal disease based on the type of symptoms exhibited by the patient and specific laboratory cultures of sputum, blood or spinal fluid.

How is it treated?

Patients with severe symptoms should see a doctor immediately. Physicians will collect specimens and start treatment with antibiotics.

If a friend or family member has this, should I be treated as well?

No, but people in the following categories should consider being vaccinated:

- Children under the age of 2
- Individuals with functional or anatomic asplenia (or sickle cell disease)
- Individuals with defective antibody or complement formation (such as agammaglobulinemia, cancer, or HIV)
- Adults over the age of 65

It may be worthwhile to mention to concerned individuals that vaccine is available for individuals in the above high risk categories.

PCV7 (Pneumovax) is recommended for all children under 24 months, and children aged 24-59 months with the risk factors mentioned above.

PPV23 (Pneumovax) is recommended for adults over the age of 65, and individuals aged 2-65 with the risk factors mentioned above.

Where can I get more information?

- Your personal doctor
- Your local health department, listed in your telephone directory
- The Utah Department of Health, Office of Epidemiology (801) 538-6191

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