



Bundesinstitut für
Öffentliche Gesundheit

ROBERT KOCH INSTITUT



Pneumococcal Vaccine

Effective protection for adults at an
increased health risk



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Wissen, was schützt.

Who is the pneumococcal vaccine recommended for?

Pneumococcal vaccinations provide protection against severe symptoms of pneumococcal disease.

The Standing Committee on Vaccination (STIKO) therefore recommends that **all people who are at increased risk of experiencing severe symptoms of the disease** are given a pneumococcal vaccine. This applies to **people aged 60 and over** and **people who have specific underlying illnesses** or have **occupational risks**. It is also recommended that **children up to the point of their 2nd birthday** are vaccinated against pneumococcal illnesses.

Which diseases are caused by pneumococci?

Pneumococci are bacteria that can cause various diseases. **In older adults, pneumococci are the pathogens most frequently found to cause bacterial pneumonia.** They can also cause other **respiratory diseases** such as sinusitis.

If the disease is severe, it could result in meningitis or the spread of pneumococci into the blood (septicaemia). People who experience severe symptoms often have to be treated in hospital and are sometimes admitted to an intensive care unit. Contracting meningitis or septicaemia could also result in permanent injury or disability. It can even result in death.

Pneumococci can cause, among other things:

- ▶ Sinusitis
- ▶ Pneumonia
- ▶ Meningitis
- ▶ Sepsis ('blood poisoning')

How do you get infected with pneumococci?



Pneumococci are mostly transmitted **via droplets when coughing and sneezing**.

If droplets that carry the pneumococci come into contact with the mucous membranes of the nose, mouth or eyes, then you can become infected.

Why is the vaccination recommended for everybody aged 60 and over?

As we grow older, the body's immune system becomes weaker. This increases the risk of experiencing severe symptoms of pneumococcal disease. Furthermore, you are more likely to experience chronic illnesses as you grow older, which also increases the risk.

For which underlying illnesses is it recommended to have a pneumococcal vaccine?

Pneumococcal vaccines are recommended for anybody who has underlying illnesses, regardless of their age. There is an **increased risk of developing severe symptoms**, particularly in the event of:

- ▶ Severe immune deficiency (e.g. due to a congenital immunodeficiency or after an organ transplant)
- ▶ Metabolic diseases such as diabetes
- ▶ Chronic heart disease
- ▶ Chronic diseases of the respiratory organs
- ▶ Liver or kidney disease
- ▶ Diseases of the nervous system

It is recommended that people who have **an increased risk of meningitis** are also vaccinated.



Many people have pneumococci present in their mouth and throat but do not become ill themselves. You can still infect other people.

Who is at an increased risk due to their occupation?

Inhaling welding fumes or metal smoke could increase your risk of catching a pneumococcal disease. It is therefore recommended **that people who weld or cut metals in their everyday work** receive a pneumococcal vaccine. Talk to the health service at your place of work about this.

What vaccination recommendations are in place for adults who are at increased risk?

STIKO recommends a **single vaccination against pneumococci with the PCV20 vaccine** for all adults who have an increased health risk.

This also applies to adults at increased risk who, in the past, have already been given one or more other pneumococcal vaccines. If this is the case, there must be a defined length of time between vaccinations.

If you are unsure whether you still need a pneumococcal vaccine, please talk to your doctor.



The pneumococcal vaccine can be given **at the same time as** other recommended vaccines, such as **the Covid-19 vaccine or the flu vaccine**.

Is the pneumococcal vaccine safe?

The vaccines are generally well tolerated and safe. You may experience some of the usual reactions to having a vaccine, such as swelling, redness and pain at the injection site. It is also possible to experience general symptoms such as fever, headaches, fatigue or muscle and joint pain after being given the vaccine. General symptoms such as these will usually subside after one to three days.

The tolerability, efficacy and safety of the vaccination are monitored on an ongoing basis.

How else can you help to protect yourself?

Having a pneumococcal vaccine means you will be well protected against severe symptoms of the illness. By following **simple hygiene measures**, you can protect both yourself and other people from pneumococcal viruses and other infectious respiratory diseases.

Important hygiene tips



Keep your distance



Pay attention to hygiene when coughing and sneezing



Thoroughly ventilate spaces on a regular basis



Wash your hands regularly as part of your everyday routine



Cover your mouth and nose with a mask if necessary



Avoid contact with others



Stay at home if you are unwell



Keep your hands away from your face

You can read more information about pneumococcal viruses and how you can protect yourself at www.infektionsschutz.de and www.rki.de/pneumokokken-impfung.

Imprint

Publisher: Federal Institute of Public Health (BIÖG),
50819 Cologne.

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Editorial office: Federal Institute of Public Health,
Infection Protection, Risk and Crisis Management

Design: VALID Digitalagentur GmbH

Image credits: © blackCAT | Getty Images

Item number: D81000520

As of: April 2025



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