



Bundesinstitut für
Öffentliche Gesundheit

ROBERT KOCH INSTITUT



Pneumococcal Vaccine

Effective protection for children against severe
pneumococcal diseases



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Wissen, was schützt.

Who is the pneumococcal vaccine recommended for?

The Standing Committee on Vaccination (STIKO) recommends that **all infants from the age of 2 months** are vaccinated. It is also recommended that **people with an increased health risk** due to **certain pre-existing conditions** or **occupational risks**, as well as **adults aged 60 and over** are also given a vaccine.

Which diseases are caused by pneumococci?

Pneumococci are bacteria that can cause various diseases. These include **respiratory diseases**. Pneumococci are also the most frequent cause of **infections of the middle ear** in infants and small children.

Severe symptoms of a pneumococcal disease can, for example, result in meningitis or the spread of pneumococci into the blood (septicaemia). Ultimately, this can result in death.

Pneumococci can cause:

- ▶ Infections of the middle ear
- ▶ Sinusitis
- ▶ Pneumonia
- ▶ Meningitis
- ▶ Sepsis ('blood poisoning')



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

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 it important for children to have the pneumococcal vaccine?

The primary aim of being vaccinated is to reduce the risk of severe pneumococcal disease. The pneumococcal vaccine is therefore recommended for all people who are at increased risk of developing severe symptoms of pneumococcal disease. **Children who are under the age of two are at particularly high risk of developing severe symptoms.** From the age of three, children are only at increased risk of severe pneumococcal disease if they also have certain pre-existing conditions.

When should I get my child vaccinated against pneumococcal illnesses?

The Standing Committee on Vaccination (STIKO) recommends that all children from the age of two months are vaccinated against pneumococcal disease. **Three vaccinations are recommended to build up protection provided by vaccination and these should take place at the ages of 2, 4 and 11 months old.** Premature babies should be given four vaccines at the age of 2, 3, 4 and 11 months old.



The pneumococcal vaccine can be given at the same time as other recommended vaccines.

What should you do if these vaccines weren't given within the child's first year?

Follow-up pneumococcal vaccines are recommended **up to their 2nd birthday**. Once they reach their 1st birthday, only 2 vaccines, at least 8 weeks apart, are required.

When is a vaccine recommended once the child has reached their 2nd birthday?

For healthy children, the risk of contracting severe pneumococcal disease is low once they have reached their 2nd birthday. It is not therefore recommended to vaccinate healthy children after the age of 2.

Further vaccines are recommended for children who are at increased risk of experiencing severe symptoms of the disease.

There is an increased risk that the child develops severe symptoms if they also have the following illnesses:

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

In addition, it is recommended that children over the age of 2 who have **an increased risk of meningitis** also receive a vaccine. **Talk to your paediatrician about this.**

Is the pneumococcal vaccine safe?

The vaccines are generally well tolerated. You may experience some of the usual reactions to having a vaccine, such as swelling, redness and pain at the injection site. During the first three days after vaccination, it is possible to experience general symptoms such as fever, drowsiness, broken sleep or gastrointestinal complaints such as diarrhoea or loss of appetite. 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.

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Further information about the pneumococcal vaccine: www.infektionsschutz.de/impfen/fuer-kinder-0-12-jahre/pneumokokken-impfung-bei-kindern

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