



People with Asthma Need to Take Extra Precautions to Avoid **PNEUMOCOCCAL DISEASE**

Pneumococcal [noo-muh-kok-uhl] disease is a serious bacterial infection that can cause pneumonia [noo-mohn-yuh], meningitis, blood-stream infections (sepsis) and ear infections.

Each year in the United States, pneumococcal disease kills thousands of adults, including 18,000 adults 65 years or older.

For people with asthma, pneumococcal pneumonia can be very serious. If pneumococcal bacteria spreads to your lungs, it can cause pneumonia.



The Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA) recommends the pneumococcal vaccine if you have asthma.



Get the pneumococcal vaccine. There are two types available. Adults with certain medical conditions may need both vaccines. This includes adults with asthma who take corticosteroids. You do not need the pneumococcal vaccine every year, like the flu shot. You may only need to get it once and a booster shot a few years later. Talk with your doctor to find out what is best for you.



Make it a family affair. Have family members without asthma get the pneumococcal vaccine to protect those that do.



Prevent exposure. The bacteria is spread through coughing, sneezing or direct contact, like kissing. If possible, avoid people who are sick. Not everyone who carries the bacteria gets sick from it. That means it is possible to catch it from someone who seems healthy.



Talk to your health care provider. Update your Asthma Action Plan with your health care provider so you know what to do if you get sick.



If you get sick with pneumonia or other pneumococcal disease symptoms, call your doctor immediately. People with asthma can quickly become sicker.

COMMON PNEUMOCOCCAL SYMPTOMS

Symptoms usually appear suddenly. Call your doctor right away if you have any of these symptoms:

- **Fever**
- **Difficulty breathing**
- **Cough (you may cough up green or yellow mucus)**
- **Shortness of breath**
- **Sweating and chills**
- **Stiff neck**
- **Disorientation (confusion)**

If pneumococcal bacteria spreads to your lungs, it can cause pneumonia. For people with asthma, pneumonia can be very serious.



WHO IS AT RISK?

Anyone can get pneumococcal disease. But certain people are at higher risk, such as:

- **Children under 2 years old**
- **Adults 65 and older**
- **Adults with weak immune systems**
- **Adults who smoke**
- **Anyone with a chronic disease, such as asthma or other lung diseases**



For people with asthma:

Pneumococcal disease can be very serious. It may be because the airways in people with asthma are more likely to be affected by infection. Corticosteroids, a common asthma medicine, may also increase your risk.

You can spread the bacteria before you even know you're sick.

You can get the pneumococcal bacteria by direct contact with someone who has it. It is spread through mucus or saliva, such as from someone who doesn't cover their face when sneezing or coughing.

The best way you can avoid getting pneumococcal disease is to get vaccinated.

Founded in 1953, the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA) is the oldest and largest nonprofit patient organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for people with asthma, allergies and related conditions through education, advocacy and research. AAFA provides practical information, community-based services and support. AAFA offers a free online support community to help you:

- Learn more about managing asthma and allergies
- Find support from people who understand
- Stay up to date on the latest research and treatments



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