

What is Pneumococcal Disease?

Pneumococcal disease is caused by *Streptococcus pneumoniae* bacteria. It contributes to infections in the lungs, the blood, the middle ear and the lining of the brain and spinal cord (meningitis).

Who is at risk of getting this disease?

Anyone can get it but some people are at higher risk. This includes those with chronic medical conditions (liver, heart, lung or kidney disease, diabetes), weak immune systems (cancer, HIV infection), smokers, alcoholics, the very young and those older than 65.

How is it spread?

It can be spread by the saliva or nasal secretions of infected people. This can happen when you share things like cigarettes or eating utensils, when you kiss an infected person or when they cough or sneeze on you. The bacteria can survive on surfaces. Touching a contaminated surface then touching your nose or mouth can cause infection.

How is it treated?

Antibiotics usually work well but even with the right treatment, some people can get very sick and in rare cases die.

How can I protect myself?

- Do not share things like cigarettes, drinks or eating utensils.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you sneeze or cough, or sneeze or cough into your sleeve.
- Wash your hands often.
- Get vaccinated. There is government funded vaccine available for children under 5 as part of the routine immunization program. People 2-64 years of age are covered if they have medical problems and all people 65 and over are encouraged to get the free vaccine.

Other Questions?

Talk to your health care provider or call our Communicable Disease Program at 613-966-5500 x349. Toll Free 1-800-267-2803 | TTY Dial 711 (1-800-267-6511) | www.hpepublichealth.ca

References

- Public Health Agency of Canada, (2006). *Canadian Immunization Guide* (7th Ed.). Ottawa, ON: Public Works & Government Services.
- The Ministry of Health & Long-Term Care, Infectious Disease Protocol, 2009.

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