



Pneumonia shot

Pneumococcal disease is a serious disease that causes much sickness and death. In fact, pneumococcal disease kills more people in the United States each year than all other vaccine-preventable diseases combined. Anyone can get pneumococcal disease. However, some people are at greater risk from the disease. These include people 65 and older, the very young and people with special health problems such as alcoholism, heart and lung disease, kidney failure, diabetes, HIV infection or certain types of cancer.

Pneumococcal disease can lead to serious infections of the lungs (pneumonia), the blood (bacteremia) and the covering of the brain (meningitis). About 1 out of every 20 people who get pneumococcal pneumonia dies from it, as do about 2 people out of 10 who get bacteremia and 3 people out of 10 who get meningitis. People with the special health problems mentioned above are even more likely to die from the disease.

Drugs such as penicillin were once effective in treating these infections but the disease has become more resistant to these drugs, making treatment of pneumococcal infections more difficult. This makes prevention of the disease through vaccination even more important.

Usually one dose of PPV is all that is needed. A second dose is recommended for those people aged 65 or older who got their first dose when they were under 65, if 5 or more years have passed since that dose.