

The number of vaccine doses required changes with your child's age because as your child gets older, their immune system is better able to respond to the vaccine, so protecting them with fewer doses of vaccine.

Doses should be given approximately two months apart.

Are there side effects from receiving the vaccine?

There may be some swelling, redness and soreness at the injection site. A child may also have a low grade fever, be sleepy, restless or irritable. Uncommon side effects may include vomiting, decreased appetite or diarrhoea. Severe reactions are very rare. There is the extremely small chance that the vaccine, like any medication, could cause serious problems, such as a severe allergic reaction. Your child cannot get pneumococcal disease from the vaccine.

Can my child receive the Prevenar® vaccine at the same time as other routine vaccinations?

All scheduled vaccines should be given at the one visit (for example, at 2 months of age), and can be given at the same time on the same day. Multiple immunisations will not overload the immune

system. There is no evidence that multiple vaccines administered at once increases the risk of serious adverse reactions.

Is it safe for my child to receive 3 injections at once?

The National Health and Medical Research Council has advised that it is safe and effective for children to receive three injections during the one visit. There is no evidence that administration of multiple vaccines at the same visit overloads a child's immune system. To minimise discomfort, two injections are given in the one limb, with the third injection administered in the opposite limb. In children under 12 months of age the thigh is used, while in children 12 months of age or older, the arm is used.

Further Information

There will be minor differences in the way the National Childhood Pneumococcal Vaccination Program is implemented in each State and Territory. In the first instance, you should contact your usual immunisation provider for details about the program. Alternatively, you can contact your State or Territory health department from the numbers listed below.

State/Territory	Contact number
ACT	02 6205 2300
NSW	Public Health Unit (look under 'Health' in the White Pages)
NT	08 8922 8044
Qld	07 3234 1500
SA	08 8226 7177
Tas	03 6222 7724 or 1800 671 738 (Tasmania only)
Vic	1300 882 008
WA	08 9321 1312

More information is available from the Immunisation Infoline on **1800 671 811** or the Immunise Australia Program website at <http://immunise.health.gov.au/pneumococcal/index.htm>



Australian Government
Department of Health and Ageing

National Childhood Pneumococcal Vaccination Program

Some common questions and answers

IMMUNISE
AUSTRALIA PROGRAM

About the National Childhood Pneumococcal Vaccination Program

In order to reduce the impact of pneumococcal disease among children, the Australian Government is introducing a National Childhood Pneumococcal Vaccination Program starting on 1 January 2005.

The Program provides free pneumococcal vaccine through your child's immunisation provider.

Who is eligible to receive free pneumococcal vaccine?

Infants born from 1 January 2005 are eligible to receive free pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (Prevenar®) at 2, 4 and 6 months of age along with other vaccines scheduled at that time.

Children born from 1 January 2003 to 31 December 2004 are eligible for free pneumococcal vaccine through a catch-up program that will run in 2005. The number of doses required for catch-up vaccination varies depending on the age at which the first dose is given. Your child's immunisation provider will advise you how many doses your child needs.

Children in specific high risk groups, who were eligible for free vaccine and for booster doses under the previous targeted program, continue to be eligible for free vaccine. These children require

additional booster doses of vaccine, which are also provided free. Your immunisation provider will advise you if your child is in a specific high risk group.

What is pneumococcal disease?

Pneumococcal disease is a potentially serious group of infections caused by bacteria. Pneumococcal disease can lead to infection around the brain (meningitis), blood infection (bacteraemia), pneumonia, and middle ear infections (otitis media). In children, middle ear infection is the most common less serious form of pneumococcal disease.

The bacteria are spread in droplets shed from the mouth or nose through coughing, sneezing or contact with articles that have been contaminated with infected droplets. Pneumococcal bacteria are commonly carried in the back of the throat and nose in healthy children and adults.

The incubation time (time taken for the germ to cause symptoms and signs) for the disease can be as short as 24 hours.

Serious pneumococcal disease presenting as meningitis in children often begins similar to many other infections with a fever - the child looks unwell and may refuse to eat or drink. Children may become very quiet and inactive or appear continually distressed. Older children may state

they have a headache and bright light hurts their eyes (photophobia). Younger children may become distressed in bright light. Neck stiffness does not necessarily occur but combined with the other symptoms indicates possible meningitis. A rash may occur at any stage and is cause for concern.

How common is pneumococcal disease in children?

Pneumococcal disease is most common in children under the age of two years and adults aged 65 years or over. The disease rates are highest in Indigenous children, particularly those in central Australia. Some children with medical conditions such as impaired immunity or chronic disease are also at increased risk.

There are 90 different types of pneumococcal bacteria. However, most cases of the disease are caused by only a few types of these bacteria. While pneumococcal disease can occur at any time, infections seem to be more common during winter and spring.

Is pneumococcal disease different to meningococcal disease?

Yes. While both pneumococcal disease and meningococcal disease can cause infection around the brain and blood poisoning, the two diseases are

caused by two different bacteria. Vaccination against meningococcal C disease will not protect your child from pneumococcal disease.

What vaccine is being used in this Program?

The pneumococcal conjugate vaccine Prevenar® is being used in this Program for injections given at 2, 4, and 6 months of age and in the catch-up component of the Program. Prevenar® works well in babies and young children and covers the seven types of pneumococcal bacteria that most commonly cause disease in children. Children in specific high risk groups require additional doses of Prevenar® or of the pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine PneumoVax®23, depending on their risk group and the age at which the vaccine is given.

How many doses of Prevenar® will my child need?

This depends on the age at which your child attends for immunisation. Between 1 and 6 months of age, your child will need three doses to be fully protected. Between the ages of 7 to 17 months, your child will need two doses, and between 18 and 23 months your child only needs one dose of Prevenar®.