Pneumococcal Disease - Factsheet

What is pneumococcal disease?

Streptococcus pneumoniae bacteria can cause infections called pneumococcal disease. Pneumococcal disease ranges from invasive clinical syndromes like osteomyelitis, pneumonia with bacteremia, meningitis to more common non-invasive clinical syndromes such as pneumonia without bacteremia, acute otitis media and sinusitis. *S. pneumoniae* is commonly found in the respiratory track of healthy people, especially children, without causing illness.

What is IPD?

Invasive pneumococcal disease (IPD) is the name for any infection caused by *Streptococcus pneumoniae* when it invades a normally sterile body site (e.g., blood, CSF, joint fluid, etc.).

What are the symptoms of pneumococcal disease?

Symptoms depend on the part of the body that is infected and generally appear within 1 to 3 days. Invasive infections can be deadly or result in long-term problems. Symptoms may include an abrupt onset of fever and chills, cough, chest pain, difficulty breathing, stiff neck, headache, and confusion.

How is pneumococcal disease spread?

The bacteria spreads from person to person by direct contact with respiratory secretions such as mucus and saliva from someone who is sick.

How long are people contagious?

The length a person is contagious is unknown and it may be as long as the organism is present in respiratory droplets but often less than 24 hours after antibiotics are administered.

Who is at risk for pneumococcal disease?

Anyone can get pneumococcal disease, but certain people are at increased risk. Children younger than 5 years old and adults 65 years or older are at increased risk. Certain medical conditions and other risk factors can also put people at increased risk for pneumococcal disease.

- Alcoholism
- Cerebrospinal (around the brain and spinal cord) fluid leak
- Chronic heart, kidney, liver, or lung disease
- Cigarette smoking
- Cochlear implant (surgically implanted hearing device to help people with severe hearing loss)
- Diabetes
- Immunocompromising condition (having a weakened immune system)

Do infected people need to be kept home from school, work, or daycare?

People who are sick should stay home until they feel well enough to return and have not had a fever for 24 hours. People with invasive infections often will need hospital care.

What treatment is available?

Antibiotics are used to treat pneumococcal disease. Early diagnosis and treatment are especially important for invasive pneumococcal infections.

How can I protect myself and my family from getting a pneumococcal infection?

Vaccines are the best way to prevent pneumococcal disease. Pneumococcal vaccination is recommended for

- All children younger than 5 years old
- People 5 through 49 years old with certain risk conditions
- Adults 50 years or older