

# Fact Sheet: Pneumococcal Disease

## What is Pneumococcal Disease?

Pneumococcal disease is an infection caused by a type of bacteria called *Streptococcus pneumoniae*. It can cause pneumonia, bloodstream infections, or meningitis (inflammation of the coverings of the brain and spinal column).

- **Pneumococcal pneumonia** is the most common type of bacterial pneumonia. Death rates for Pneumococcal pneumonia in adults are 15-20% and as high as 40% among elderly patients.
- **Pneumococcal meningitis** is the leading cause of bacterial meningitis among children and adults in the United States. Death rates from Pneumococcal meningitis are approximately 20-50% in adults. Pneumococcal meningitis can result in permanent damage to the brain and nervous system, learning deficits and deafness.

## Signs and Symptoms

Symptoms of Pneumococcal disease typically occur 1 to 3 days after exposure and may include the following:

- abrupt onset of fever
- shaking or chills headache
- cough
- chest pain
- disorientation
- shortness of breath
- weakness
- stiff neck

## How is it spread?

The bacteria that cause Pneumococcal disease are spread by close contact with respiratory droplets from those who are infected. Bacteria enter the body when droplets land in the mouths or noses of people in close contact.

## Prevention

The best way to prevent Pneumococcal disease is to be vaccinated.

- Vaccination for Pneumococcal disease is included in routine childhood immunizations. Make sure that your child is up to date on immunizations.
- A vaccination is available for those over the age of 65 or those with underlying medical conditions.

In addition to getting the vaccine, people should:

- Wash their hands frequently, especially after coughing, sneezing, and handling used tissues.
- Avoid close contact with those who are sick.

## Treatment

- There are antibiotics available to treat Pneumococcal infections. However, many Pneumococcal bacteria are becoming resistant to commonly used antibiotics making treatment more difficult.
- It is more effective to prevent Pneumococcal infections through vaccination, rather than depend on antibiotic treatment after infection occurs.

This fact sheet is for informational purposes and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care professional. For more information about communicable disease, speak to your health care provider or call the Ingham County Health Department at (517)-887-4308.

Visit our website at <http://hd.ingham.org/Home>

or the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention at: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

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