Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department

Protect Yourself and Your Family: Get the Pneumococcal Vaccine

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) is reminding everyone that getting the pneumococcal vaccine can help protect you from serious illness. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has updated guidelines so that more people can now get this important shot starting at age 50.

What Is Pneumococcal Disease?
Pneumococcal disease is caused by bacteria called *Streptococcus pneumoniae.*
These bacteria can cause:

- Pneumonia (lung infection)
- Meningitis (infection of the brain and spinal cord covering)
- Blood infections (bacteremia)
- Ear and sinus infections

These illnesses can make people very sick and sometimes lead to death. Over the past year in the health district, 143 people have gone to the emergency room because of pneumonia. Each year about 900,000 people in the US will be diagnosed with pneumonia, which includes pneumococcal disease. About 150,000 of those will be hospitalized and about 41,000 people will die from pneumonia or a complication from pneumonia each year, according to data from the CDC.

Why is the Vaccine Important?
The vaccine helps your body build protection, so you do not get as sick if you come into contact with these bacteria. It is especially important for:

- Children under age 5
- Adults age 50 and older
- People with health problems like diabetes, heart disease, lung disease, or weak immune systems

Getting vaccinated keeps you, your family, and your community healthy. It also helps prevent hospital stays and serious complications.

Who Can Get the Vaccine?
- All babies and young children should get 4 doses of a pneumococcal vaccine during their well child checks at 2 months, 4 months, 6 months, and 12–15 months old.
- Everyone 50 years and older can get a pneumococcal vaccine if they haven't had one before.

- Adults 19–49 years old with certain health conditions can also get pneumococcal vaccine.

There are a few different types of pneumococcal vaccines (PCV15, PCV20, PCV21, and PPSV23). Your doctor or pharmacist can help you choose the right one for you.

When Can You Get Vaccinated?

You can get the pneumococcal vaccine any time of year. It is often given during the same visit as your flu or COVID shot. If you have already received one type of pneumococcal vaccine, your healthcare provider can tell you if they recommend another type to boost your protection.

"Getting the pneumococcal vaccine is one of the best ways to stay healthy," said Melissa Propp, Clinic Manager at SWNPHD. "If you're age 50 or older, or have a health condition, talk to your doctor or pharmacist about getting vaccinated for pneumonia."

For more information on how to protect your health during respiratory virus season, call SWNPHD at 308-345-4223. Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. Follow SWNPHD on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, or view the website at swhealth.ne.gov which contains many resources and additional information helpful to prevent disease, promote and protect health.

###