

Pneumococcal Immunization Resource Kit

Patient Article Template #1: Worried about Pandemic H1N1 Influenza? Pneumococcal Immunizations Prevent Serious Flu Complications!

You have probably heard a lot about how to protect yourself from Pandemic H1N1 Influenza (formerly known as swine flu). For instance, you can wash your hands often and avoid contact with sick people. However, you might not have heard about another important way to prevent the most common flu complication – getting pneumococcal vaccine.

Many of the people who have died from Pandemic H1N1 Influenza have the same chronic health conditions that also make them more likely to suffer or die from pneumococcal disease. Getting pneumococcal vaccine now can prevent complications caused by Pandemic H1N1 Influenza and from pneumococcal disease throughout the year.

Pneumococcal disease can be serious.

In the U.S., pneumococcal disease kills more people than all other diseases that vaccines prevent, combined. It is most serious for children younger than two and adults older than 65 years of age.

When you hear “pneumococcal immunization”, you probably think of pneumonia. Pneumococcal vaccines can prevent pneumonia, a serious lung infection that kills about 1 out of 20 people who get it. More importantly, they prevent:

- Bacteremia, a blood infection that can be serious and kill 1 out of every 5 people who get it.
- Bacterial meningitis, an infection in the brain and spinal cord. It can cause deafness, seizures, and brain damage and kills 3 out of 10 people who get it.

Pneumococcal vaccines work.

Because of the pneumococcal vaccine that is given to children younger than 5 years of age, there are 80% fewer severe cases of this disease in children.

Additionally, hospitalized patients who were previously vaccinated with pneumococcal vaccine are 70% less likely to develop serious cases of this disease that could lead to death.

Pneumococcal vaccines are safe.

Most vaccine side effects don't last long and are minor, such as swelling where the shot is given. These side effects actually show that the vaccine is doing its job- preparing your body to fight disease.

Are you due for a pneumococcal immunization?

Getting a pneumococcal vaccine now can prevent seasonal flu and Pandemic H1N1 Influenza complications and pneumococcal disease throughout the year. Pneumococcal vaccines are recommended for:

- Infants and children under 5 years of age.
- People over the age of 65.
- People age two or older who:
 - Have long-term health issues such as diabetes; chronic lung disease; cirrhosis; alcoholism; and heart, kidney or liver disease.
 - Have Hodgkin's disease, lymphoma, leukemia, HIV infection, or AIDS.
 - Receive long-term steroids, certain cancer drugs, or radiation therapy.
- People over the age of 19 who smoke and/or have asthma.
- People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care homes.

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Protect yourself and family against pneumococcal disease and flu complications!

Talk to your health care provider about a pneumococcal immunization today!

HEALTH PLAN ADDS INFORMATION ABOUT COVERAGE FOR PNEUMOCOCCAL VACCINATIONS HERE

Those without insurance may call the Los Angeles County Information Line at 2-1-1 or visit www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip to find reduced-cost or no-cost vaccine providers.

To learn more, please visit:

- California Department of Public Health:
www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/PneumococcalDisease.aspx
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:
www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/pneumo/default.htm#patient
- Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Immunization Program:
www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip

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To download additional resources for promoting pneumococcal immunizations, visit www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip.

Questions about the “Pneumococcal Immunization Resource Kit” may be directed to Julia Heinzerling, M.P.H. at jheinzerling@ph.lacounty.gov or 213-351-7479.

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