

# Pneumococcal Immunization Resource Kit

## Provider Article Template: Pneumococcal Vaccine- An Important Tool against Influenza Complications

Recently, the rapid emergence of Pandemic H1N1 Influenza as a worldwide public health threat reminded us of the unpredictability of the influenza (flu) virus. Newly circulating flu viruses can quickly lead to large-scale disease outbreaks or pandemics, resulting in serious illnesses and deaths in populations that lack immunity to them. A vaccine against the Pandemic H1N1 Influenza strain will not be available until the upcoming fall or winter due to the time that is required to develop, test, and mass-produce vaccines. Fortunately, there is much that we can do now to protect vulnerable patients from the serious complications that can occur from the flu.

### **Pandemic flu predisposes individuals to secondary bacterial pneumonia.**

During the 1918 flu pandemic, Streptococcus pneumonia (the pneumococcus) was identified in about 50% of secondary bacterial pneumonia cases and was responsible for 20% of the deaths. During the recent Pandemic H1N1 Influenza outbreak, most of the deaths have occurred among persons with chronic health conditions-- the same conditions that qualify individuals for receipt of pneumococcal vaccine. A pneumococcal immunization now can protect your patients from Pandemic H1N1 Influenza complications and from pneumococcal infections throughout the year.

### **Both pneumococcal vaccines are effective.**

Pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine (PPSV) has been shown to be 56% to 81% effective in preventing invasive pneumococcal disease. This vaccine can significantly decrease the 40,000 - 60,000 pneumococcal disease deaths that occur each year in the United States, and the larger number of such deaths that would occur during a flu pandemic.

Since pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV) was licensed in the U.S., severe pneumococcal disease has dropped by nearly 80% among children younger than five years of age. Furthermore, vaccinated children have an average of 8% fewer physician visits for otitis media, the most common reason for pediatric medical visits in the U.S.

Despite the benefits of vaccination, vaccination rates are very low with only 16% of persons aged 18-49 years with high-risk health conditions in the U.S., reporting receipt of PPSV in 2007.

### **Providers are encouraged to screen their patients for pneumococcal vaccination in the upcoming flu season and throughout the year.**

- PCV is routinely recommended for infants and children at 2 months, 4 months, 6 months, and 12-15 months of age and for children younger than 5 years of age who have not received any previous doses.
- Persons aged two years and older with normal immune systems who have certain chronic health conditions such as diabetes, lung disease and heart disease, should receive one dose of PPSV before they turn 65 years of age.
- Persons 2 years of age and older with functional or anatomic asplenia, or renal disease, or any immunocompromising disease or condition should receive two doses of PPSV at least 5 years apart.

[> more](#)

- All persons, including healthy adults with no chronic health conditions, should receive one dose of PPSV when they reach age 65 years, unless they have already received two life-time doses at an earlier age. Persons who become 65 years of age who received one dose at an earlier time can receive a second dose as long as it has been five years since the earlier dose.
- Adults over 19 years of age who smoke and/or have asthma should be vaccinated.

### **Pneumococcal vaccines are readily accessible and covered by most health plans in the United States.**

Now is a good time for all health care providers to assess the pneumococcal vaccination status of their medically high-risk patients. Pneumococcal vaccines are covered by Medicare, Medi-Cal, the Vaccines for Children Program (VFC) and **[ADD YOUR HEALTH PLAN NAME- if covered]** for individuals meeting coverage criteria.

Providers that purchase and administer the vaccine will be reimbursed for both the cost of the vaccine, as well as the cost of health worker time and the supplies required to administer it (administrative costs).

### ***HEALTH PLAN ADDS INFORMATION ABOUT COVERAGE/REIMBURSEMENT FOR PNEUMOCOCCAL VACCINATIONS HERE***

Please contact other health plans you participate in to learn the procedures for obtaining appropriate reimbursement.

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To download additional resources for promoting pneumococcal immunizations, visit [www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip](http://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](mailto:jheinzerling@ph.lacounty.gov) or 213-351-7479.

### **Stay up-to-date on Pneumococcal Immunization Recommendations and Resources**

- Download the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health “Pneumococcal Immunization Resource Kit”, which contains PPSV and PCV recommendations, Adult and Childhood Immunization Schedules, Vaccine Information Statements, links to Provider Trainings, and Consumer and Provider Educational Resources. [www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip](http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip).
- Complete the CDC’s “New ACIP recommendations for use of pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine in adults” webcast. [www.cdc.gov/vaccines/ed/ciinc/2009March.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/ed/ciinc/2009March.htm)

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