

## PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR CHILD FROM PNEUMOCOCCAL DISEASE

### What is Pneumococcal Disease?

Pneumococcal disease is caused by the bacteria *Streptococcus pneumoniae*. These bacteria cause 40% to 60% of all ear infections and are the most frequent cause for recurrent ear infections in children. Pneumococcal disease can also cause serious infections such as meningitis (an infection in the lining of the brain or spinal cord) and pneumonia (infection in the lungs) which could lead to serious long-term effects like deafness and brain injury or possibly death. These infections are known as Invasive Pneumococcal Diseases (IPD).

### How is this disease spread?

Pneumococcal disease is spread from an infected person to another person through the respiratory route which includes kissing, coughing, sneezing, sharing water bottles or from handling soiled items such as tissues.

### How can this disease be prevented?

Immunization and clean, cover and contain practices are the best methods of prevention.

There are two vaccines available. Children receive immunization against pneumococcal disease at 2 months, 4 months and 12 months as part of the routine provincial program. One extra dose is given to babies at 6 months if they are at risk for developing this disease as advised by their health care provider. Older children and adults with conditions putting them at high risk for pneumococcal disease are advised by their health care provider for the appropriate vaccine for their age and medical condition. Pneumococcal immunization is recommended for all adults over 60 years of age.

### What are the common side effects?

Some people may have redness, tenderness, swelling or hardness at the injection site. There may be fever and some children may be fussy, restless and not very hungry for a day or two. For the soreness or fever, a fever reducing medication such as acetaminophen can be given. If you or your child has any other side effects, you should notify your doctor or community/public health nurse.

### Who should not get this vaccine?

If you or your child has any allergies or serious illnesses, you should let the community/public health nurse or doctor know. A slight cold is not a reason to delay the vaccine.

**For additional information and services  
contact your Regional Health Authority**