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Pneumococcal Vaccine

The Division of Public Health is delighted to announce that pneumococcal vaccine is now available through the Section of Communicable Disease Control free of charge to all persons for whom the vaccine is recommended.

Pneumococcal Vaccine contains the capsular polysaccharides of 14 pneumococcal types from a total of 83 known serotypes. Results of extensive national epidemiologic studies conducted by the Center for Disease Control have shown that these 14 pneumococcal types account for 85% of the isolates of pneumococcus in the United States. The vaccine is effective in preventing pneumococcal infection caused by the 14 serotypes contained in the vaccine.

The vaccine is currently recommended for:

1. older persons, particularly those over age 60,
2. persons over two years of age who have anatomical asplenia or who have splenic dysfunction due to sickle cell disease or other causes,
3. persons over two years of age with chronic illnesses in which there is an increased risk of pneumococcal disease, such as diabetes mellitus, and/or functional impairment of the cardiorespiratory, hepatic, or renal systems.

The vaccine should not be given in pregnancy. Children less than two years of age respond poorly to the vaccine and should not be vaccinated.

Antibodies are known to persist for as long as five years after vaccination, and it is probable that protection resulting from immunization is long lived. There are currently no recommendations for booster vaccinations which may, in fact, not be required. Pneumococcal vaccine may be injected at the same time from different syringes at separate sites without impairing the immunologic responses to either vaccine.

Pneumococcal vaccine has proven to be safe; side effects, although frequent, are not severe. No permanent sequelae or fatalities have been reported following its administration. In one study, 40% of recipients reported pain at the injection site, 30% reported erythema, and 4% reported fever; 60% of recipients reported no reaction.

The vaccine is administered in a single 0.5 ml dose subcutaneously or intramuscularly. The vaccine should be stored at 2-8° C (35-46° F). The vaccine is used directly as supplied; no dilution or reconstitution is necessary.

Vaccine orders can be placed with Craig Leutzinger (272-7534), Section of Communicable Disease Control, Division of Public Health, Department of Health & Social Services, 338 Denali St., Room 313 MacKay Building, Anchorage, Alaska 99501. Questions about pneumococcal vaccine should be addressed to John Middaugh, M.D., State Epidemiologist, Division of Public Health, Dept. of Health & Social Services, 338 Denali St., Room 313 MacKay Building, Anchorage, Alaska 99501.