

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What are Pneumococcal bacteria?**

Pneumococcal infections are caused by pneumococcal bacteria in the nose or throat. Pneumococcal bacteria can cause serious illnesses like pneumonia, bacterial meningitis and can lead to invasive pneumococcal disease, which is when the bacteria are found inside a major organ or the blood. They can also cause other conditions like severe ear infections.

Some of the symptoms of pneumococcal infection can include:

Fever, headache, vomiting, blotchy rash that doesn't fade, a stiff neck, sensitivity to bright lights, a lack of energy, hearing loss, rapid heartbeat, difficulty breathing.

The chance of you becoming unwell with pneumococcal infection increases if you're aged 65 years or over or have an underlying health condition.

### **Why should I have the Pneumococcal vaccine?**

The pneumococcal vaccine helps to protect against serious conditions caused by pneumococcal bacteria like common types of meningitis, severe ear infections, and some types of pneumonia. These illnesses can result in long-term disability or even cause death. It is important to get vaccinated to prevent you from becoming unwell or reduce the effects if you do have a pneumococcal infection.

### **Vaccine safety.**

All medicines, including vaccines, are tested for safety and effectiveness before they are allowed to be used and are monitored by the Medicines and Health care products Regulatory Agency.

### **About the vaccine.**

The *Pneumococcal Polysaccharide* vaccine is given as an injection in the upper arm. The vaccine doesn't contain live bacteria and cannot cause an infection.

Most people only need a single dose of the vaccine, which will help protect them for life. A smaller number of people who have a long-term health condition might need a booster dose every 5 years, depending on their health condition.

Most people do not experience any, or only mild side effects after having the vaccine. Side effects mean the vaccine is teaching your body's immune system how to protect itself from the disease. The most common side effects might include a sore arm or a slight fever and are usually managed by taking paracetamol. A member of staff will discuss this with you at your appointment.

Contact your GP practice if you have side effects that last for longer than a few days.

### **I've missed my vaccination. What should I do?**

Contact the vaccination hub on 01896 809250, who will be able to advise.

### **I have a fear of needles, is there another option?**

If you have a fear of needles, please let the person (vaccinator) giving you your vaccine know. Feeling nervous can be a natural response for some people. Your vaccinator understands this and will help you. The needles used are small and you should only feel a tiny scratch.

### **Do I need the pneumococcal vaccine if I have previously had a Pneumococcal Infection?**

Yes. Developing a pneumococcal disease once doesn't protect you for getting it again or another type of infection which might be more serious. Having the vaccine helps reduce your risk of infection.

### **I am in good health and have never had a pneumococcal infection; do I need the vaccine?**

Yes. A pneumococcal infection can affect anyone at any age. Some people are a higher risk of serious illness but might be unaware of this.

### **Am I eligible for the Pneumococcal vaccine?**

You are eligible for the pneumococcal vaccine if you are aged 65 year or over.

You are also eligible if you have any of the following health conditions:

- Asplenia or problems with the spleen
- Chronic respiratory disease
- Chronic heart disease
- Chronic liver disease
- Diabetes
- Immunosuppression
- Cochlear implants
- Cerebrospinal fluid leak
- Occupational risk if you are exposure to pneumococcal bacteria because of your job.

Everyone eligible for Pneumococcal vaccination should have received a letter asking you to contact NHS Borders vaccination team to arrange an appointment.

### **I am unwell on the day of my appointment, should I still get my vaccination?**

If you feel too unwell to do normal activities, or have a high temperature, wait until you're feeling better.

### **I can't attend my appointment?**

It is important that you attend your vaccination appointment, but we understand this isn't always possible. You can change your appointment by calling the vaccination hub on 01896 809250. Cancelling or changing your appointment in advance means that we can offer your appointment to someone else.

### **Can I still have a pneumococcal infection even after having the vaccine?**

It is possible to have a pneumococcal infection after having the vaccine but it is likely to be less serious. The vaccination can take up to 10 days for your body to build up extra protection.

### **Is there anything I should bring to my appointment?**

If you are taking medication, it's important that you bring a list of your medicines to discuss with the person giving you your vaccination.

### **Can I bring a friend, family member or carer to my appointment?**

Yes, you can ask someone to come with you to your appointment. Where possible we would suggest limiting this to one person however, we do accommodate for families with children.

### **I need an interpreter at my appointment, what should I do?**

If you need a BSL interpreter or a deaf-blind guide at your vaccination appointment, please call 01896 809250 or email [Vaccination.BookingHub@borders.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:Vaccination.BookingHub@borders.scot.nhs.uk) as soon as possible.

Telephone interpreting for other languages is available at our clinics (via Big Word / language line), just let one of our admin staff know when you arrive at the clinic.

### **I have no transport to get to my appointment?**

If you need transport call Scottish Borders Council on 0300 100 1800. We would suggest that you contact Scottish Borders Council as soon as possible as it might take a little for the Council to make arrangements for you.

Further information is available from [NHS inform](#)