Vaccine protection according to the schedule

Your pediatrician normally administers the pneumococcal vaccine in four doses.\(^1\)0\(^1\)

The STIKO \[Ständige Impfkommission (Permanent Vaccine Commission)\] vaccine schedule recommends giving the vaccines as soon as possible after the 2nd, 3rd and 4th month of life and between the 11th and 14th month of life:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preventive examination</th>
<th>U4</th>
<th>U6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age (in completed months)</td>
<td>2 Months</td>
<td>3 Months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pneumococcal vaccine</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Why is complete vaccination so important?

The first three doses of the pneumococcal vaccine which your child receives in his/her first months of life build protection against illness in the first year of life.

As with all vaccines, it is important to complete this vaccine series. This is the only way to give your child complete and above all long-term protection against pneumococcal illnesses.

Without the fourth vaccination, your child’s vaccine series is not complete and there is still an increased risk of illness.\(^1\)1,\(^1\)2

Vaccinations can be done even when your child has a slight cold.\(^10\) Therefore, don’t forget any of the recommended vaccine dates. Ask your pediatrician if you have any questions.

As a reminder of your child’s recommended vaccine dates, simply stick the stickers below into your calendar:

Reminder service - also by e-mail or text

You can also find more information about the pneumococcal vaccine and an individual, automatic and free reminder service via e-mail or text for the STIKO-recommended vaccine dates at www.impftipp.de

If you have further questions, the employees of our European Medical Information Service (EMI) can help you. You can reach them Monday to Friday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. at:

Telephone: +49 (0) 30 55 00 55 - 51 000
Fax: +49 (0) 30 55 00 54 - 10 000
E-mail: medinfo_germany@pfizer.com

\(^1\)0 Epid. Bull Nr. 30/2010
\(^1\)1 Surveillance van Infectieziekten bij kinderen in Belgie. Jaarverslag 2008 – pedsurv. IPH/Epreports nr. 2008052
\(^1\)2 Ruckinger S et al. Vaccine 2010; 28: 5012 – 5016
What are pneumococci?

Pneumococci (streptococcus pneumoniae) are bacteria which can cause many illnesses. Aside from severe, life-threatening illnesses, pneumococci can also cause other illnesses such as painful middle ear inflammations.

Why are pneumococci so dangerous?

Similarly to flu viruses, pneumococci are transmitted through droplets in the air, e.g. by sneezing or coughing. They frequently colonize the nose or throat without initially triggering illnesses. Sometimes pneumococci then wander from the nose or throat to other places in the body, where they can trigger various severe infections, e.g. meningitis, pneumonia and blood poisoning.

Illnesses caused by pneumococci

**Meningitis** is a severe infection of the central nervous system (CNS) which can become a life-threatening illness within a few hours. The illness is difficult to differentiate from a mild infection, particularly in the early stages. Due to the rapid progression, it is often very difficult to recognize in good time. Even when therapy is provided in time, approximately 5% of those who get meningitis die. Long-term damage occurs in one-quarter of patients. Possible long-term consequences include paralysis, deafness, epilepsy, developmental disorders and other impairments.

**Blood poisoning (sepsis)**, pathogens or their toxins enter the blood circulation and can affect body organs. The body reacts with what is known as an inflammatory reaction. Fever, pallor, an increased respiration and heart rate as well as greater numbers of white blood cells are signs that a dramatic fight is taking place.

**Pneumonia** is an acute or chronic inflammation of the lung tissue. It is accompanied by coughing, fever and feeling severely ill.

**Middle ear inflammation (otitis media)** can be very painful. If it occurs repeatedly, it usually becomes a problem because its treatment becomes increasingly complicated.

Why is it important to vaccinate against pneumococci early?

Starting vaccinations early is especially important for the youngest children, because a child’s immune system at birth is not yet fully mature. Mothers give their child what is known as maternal passive immunity. This consists of antibodies against illnesses which the mother has undergone herself or which she has been vaccinated against. In this way, the newborn is protected against various infectious illnesses in his/her first months of life. However this maternal passive immunity quickly diminishes. Therefore, the Ständige Impfkommission (STIKO) recommends having children vaccinated at the earliest possible time.

Furthermore, pneumococci are also more and more frequently resistant to the generally used antibiotics. This is another reason to protect your child with a vaccination.

Children with chronic illnesses (e.g. respiratory tract illnesses) also need special protection. Ask your physician about this.

How well is the vaccination tolerated?

The pneumococcal protective vaccination is a well investigated vaccination. Serious side effects are normally not expected. Side effects, e.g. mild swelling and redness at the injection site or fever, may occur. If you have further questions about this, please ask your physician.