

Pneumococcal Vaccination: Which GI Patients Need It?

The CDC's (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends pneumococcal vaccination for patients who are receiving long-term immunosuppressive therapy. This includes steroids, biologics and immunomodulators such as prednisone, 6-mercaptopurine, azathioprine, methotrexate, infliximab (Remicade), adalimumab (Humira), Vedolizumab (Entyvio) – medications often used to treat patients with gastrointestinal disorders.

There are currently 2 types of pneumococcal vaccines: pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV13 or Prevnar 13®) and pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine (PPSV23 (PNEUMOVAX) or Pneumovax®).

When should these vaccines be given?

Patients who have never received pneumococcal vaccine:

Adults aged ≥19 years receiving long-term immunosuppressive therapy who have not previously received PCV13 (Prevnar) or PPSV23 (Pneumovax®), should receive a dose Prevnar first, followed by a dose of Pneumovax® at least 8 weeks

later. A second dose of Pneumovax® is recommended 5 years after the first dose of Pneumovax®. Additionally, those who received Pneumovax® before the age of 65, should receive another dose of the vaccine at 65 years of age, or later if at least 5 years have elapsed since their previous dose of Pneumovax®.

Patients who have received PPSV23 (Pneumovax®) in the past:

Adults aged ≥19 years receiving long-term immunosuppressive therapy who previously have received doses of Pneumovax® should be given a Prevnar dose ≥1 year after the last Pneumovax® dose was received. For those who require additional doses of Pneumovax®, the first such dose should be given no sooner than 8 weeks after Prevnar and at least 5 years after the most recent dose of Pneumovax®.

For additional details, consult the [PPSV23 Vaccine Information Statement](#), the [PCV13 Vaccine Information Statement](#), the [Adult Immunization Schedule](#), and [ACIP Pneumococcal Vaccine Recommendations](#).

Are pneumococcal vaccines effective?

In late 2011, FDA licensed Prevnar for use among adults 50 years of age or older. In a study including approximately 85,000 adults 65 years or older in the Netherlands, Prevnar was 75% effective at preventing invasive pneumococcal disease and 45% effective at preventing pneumococcal pneumonia caused by the serotypes included in the vaccine.

Pneumovax®, the pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine that includes 23 serotypes, has been shown to be 50-85% effective in preventing invasive disease caused by those 23 serotypes in adults with healthy immune systems.

Pneumococcal vaccines are effective at preventing serious infections by Streptococcus pneumonia (pneumococcus), one of the bacteria which can cause bacterial pneumonia. These infections include pneumococcal sepsis (blood poisoning) and pneumococcal meningitis. These vaccines may reduce the risk of your getting pneumococcal pneumonia, but do not completely prevent it. These vaccines do not prevent other kinds of pneumonia including pneumonia caused by other bacteria, Legionnaire's disease or viral pneumonia.

