

PNEUMONIA VACCINE

Do I Need A Booster Shot?

The physicians and nurse practitioners at Mill Creek Medical Associates have been receiving a number of questions about the pneumonia vaccine. We have recently put together this recommendation to answer the most frequent patient concerns that we have heard.

Should I get the pneumonia vaccine?

The Pneumonia Vaccine, or Pneumovax, is a vaccine that protects against the Strep Pneumoniae (or Pneumococcus) bacteria that causes one of the most deadly kinds of pneumonia, blood infections (sepsis), and meningitis. It does not protect against EVERY kind of pneumonia, just this most dangerous kind. Everyone becomes more susceptible to this infection as they get older, so EVERYONE is offered the vaccine at the age of 65. Medicare even pays for it!

Certain other people with High Risk conditions should also get the Pneumonia Vaccine before the age of 65. Individuals with the following conditions should consider receiving the vaccine anytime:

- Diabetes
- COPD/Emphysema (but NOT asthma)
- Severe Heart Disease and Heart Failure
- People with their Spleen Removed
- Certain kinds of Cancer like Lymphomas
- HIV Positive
- Chronic Kidney Failure

Do I Need To Get A Booster Shot?

Anyone who receives the Pnuemonia Vaccine BEFORE the age of 65 needs to get a booster shot AFTER age 65, when it is at least FIVE YEARS from the date of the first shot. So, if you receive the Vaccine for Diabetes at age 57, you will get the shot again when you are 65. If you receive the shot at 62, then you will get it again at age 67.

Do I Need A Booster Shot Every 5 Years?

Everyone who has lost a Spleen should get the Vaccine every 5 to 7 years, regardless of their age.

There is some evidence that certain people with Chronic Kidney Failure, and Diabetes, may lose some of their protection against the Pneumococcus bug after 5 to 7 years. No one really knows if it is absolutely necessary for anyone to receive a booster because of this information. Certain individual patients with high risk conditions or situations may be offered the vaccine every 5 to 7 years. As a general policy, we are recommending that the vast majority of patients DO NOT NEED A BOOSTER after they receive the vaccine after age 65.

Feel free to discuss this further with your particular care-giver.

