

## PNEUMOCOCCAL INFECTION

Pneumococcus is also called *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, but it is not the same bacteria that cause strep throat. Before the licensure of the conjugate pneumococcal vaccine for children in 2000, about a third of the bacterial ear infections in young children were caused by pneumococcus. Now it appears that some of these ear infections are being prevented. Rates of serious pneumococcal infections in children have decreased markedly since use of the conjugate pneumococcal vaccine.

**CAUSE** *Streptococcus pneumoniae* bacteria.

**SYMPTOMS** Symptoms of ear infection can include fever, ear pain, pulling at the ear, behavior or appetite change, and sometimes ear redness or drainage.

More serious pneumococcal infections include lung infection (pneumonia), bloodstream infection (septicemia), and infection of the brain (meningitis).

**SPREAD** Persons may “carry” pneumococcus in their nose or throat, also referred to as being colonized, meaning that the bacteria grow there without causing illness. Spread may occur when a “carrier” of the pneumococcus bacteria coughs or sneezes the bacteria into the air and another person breathes them in. By touching the secretions from the nose and mouth of an infected/colonized person then touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.

**INCUBATION** Varies by type of infection.

**CONTAGIOUS PERIOD** Unknown.

**EXCLUSION** None, if the child is well enough to participate in routine activities.

**DIAGNOSIS** Recommend parents/guardians call their healthcare provider if their child has a high fever or persistent ear pain.

**TREATMENT** Pneumococcal infections are often treated with antibiotics.

### PREVENTION/CONTROL

- Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine should be given to all children at 2, 4 and 6 months, plus a booster at 12-15 months of age.
- Pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine should be given to children over the age of 2 who have certain chronic illnesses that limit the effectiveness of the immune system or that predispose children to serious pneumococcal infection. A healthcare provider can determine the need for this vaccine.
- Unnecessary antibiotic use or not taking antibiotics as prescribed (not finishing the entire prescription or sharing the antibiotics with others) contribute to the development of antibiotic-resistant bacteria.
- Cover nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing and sneezing or cough/sneeze into your sleeve. Dispose of used tissues.

## PNEUMOCOCCAL INFECTIONS

### PREVENTION/CONTROL (CONTINUED)

- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water after contact with secretions from the nose or mouth. **Thorough handwashing is the best way to prevent the spread of communicable diseases.**
- Clean and sanitize mouthed toys, objects, and surfaces at least daily and when soiled. (See pgs 34-36.)

For more information, call Hennepin County HSPHD-Epidemiology at (612) 543-5230, your local health department, or the Minnesota Department of Health (651) 201-5414.