

## **Fact Sheet for Medicare Beneficiaries: Protect Yourself against Pneumonia**

### **What is pneumococcal pneumonia?**

Pneumococcal pneumonia is a serious lung infection. It is the most common kind of pneumonia identified in people with Medicare. Symptoms include fever, aches, fatigue, chest pain, cough, shortness of breath and confusion.

### **How can I prevent getting pneumococcal pneumonia?**

Get your pneumococcal vaccination, or pneu shot, now. If you're over age 65, you most likely will need to get this shot only once in your lifetime.

### **How serious is pneumococcal pneumonia?**

Pneumonia is the principal reason for the hospitalization of approximately 600,000 Medicare beneficiaries and for 500,000 emergency room visits each year. In addition, pneumonia is responsible for the deaths of more people in the United States each year than all other vaccine-preventable diseases combined. The incidence of pneumonia increases with age, and more than 90% of deaths due to the condition are in people 65 or older.

### **Is pneumococcal pneumonia treatable?**

Drugs, such as penicillin, were once effective in treating pneumococcal pneumonia, but some antibiotics no longer work in combatting the disease, making treatment more difficult. This makes prevention of the disease by getting a pneu shot even more important.

### **Will the pneu shot make me sick?**

The pneu shot cannot cause pneumonia. A few people may have minor side effects, such as swelling at the site of the injection, soreness, fever or muscle pain, but these are usually mild and last a very short time.

### **How much does the vaccination cost?**

The pneu shot is covered by Medicare Part B.

### **Where can I get the vaccination?**

Call your physician's office to find out where you can get your shot, or if you're in the hospital, ask to have a pneu shot.

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