

# PCV or Pneumococcal Vaccine

## The Disease

The *Streptococcus pneumoniae* bacteria kills more people in the United States each year than all other vaccine-preventable diseases combined (about 40,000). It is commonly thought of as a disease of the elderly, but it also takes its toll among our children. It is the leading cause of bacterial meningitis in the country, hitting children under one year old the hardest. About 200 children die from invasive pneumococcal disease each year.

## The Immunization

Until 2000, pneumococcal vaccine was recommended mostly for adults over 65 years old, and was not licensed at all for children under 2. This is because the only type of vaccine that was available (pneumococcal "polysaccharide" vaccine) doesn't work very well for young children. In 2000, a different type of vaccine (pneumococcal "conjugate" vaccine- PCV7) was licensed that works for children under 2, and it was finally possible to prevent pneumococcal disease in this vulnerable age group. In 2010, a new version of the pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV13) was approved that protects against even more strains of pneumococcal disease.

<http://www.aap.org/immunization/illnesses/pneumococcal/pneumococcal.html>