

PNEUMONIA VACCINATION FOR SENIORS: A PRACTICE-CHANGING RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CDC

The highest mortality rate from invasive pneumococcal disease is in persons over 65 years old, especially in those with co-morbidities. Because of the suboptimal immunogenicity of the current polyvalent pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine (PPSV23), the CDC now recommends that the conjugate vaccine (Pevnar 13)* be given to seniors as follows:

Adults 65 years of age or older should receive both the PCV13 (Pevnar) and the PPSV23 (classic pneumovax)

- One can administer either pneumococcal vaccine with other vaccines, but not together
- If an individual has received the PPSV23, it is recommended to wait one year before administering the PCV13 (Pevnar)
- If an individual has received the PCV13 (Pevnar), wait 6-12 months to administer the PPSV23
- The minimum acceptable interval between injections is 8 weeks
- Repeat the PPSV23 5 years after the previous PPSV23 if the first injection has been given before age 65, and 6-12 months after the PCV13 (I will never remember this without a cheat sheet!)
- No recommendations as to when to repeat the PCV13

* The surface polysaccharide capsule of *S. pneumonia* resists phagocytosis and killing. Antibody directed against the virus capsule mitigates this defense mechanism. Unfortunately, despite mandates to provide PPSV23 to Medicare patients (especially at hospital discharge), there is no clear benefit of this vaccine in older persons. Immunogenicity decreases with increasing age. The conjugate vaccine (Pevnar 13) was designed to overcome this by covalent linking of pneumococcal polysaccharide capsule to a non-toxic diphtheria protein (who thinks of this stuff!), rendering it more immunogenic. This vaccine clearly works better in toddlers and (in the only randomized controlled trial in adults) in African patients with HIV who did not respond to the PPSV23. Therefore, in 2012 the CDC recommended Pevnar 13 for high risk adults (asplenia, chronic diseases, diabetes) and most **recently for persons over 65 years old.**

I understand that the cost of the conjugate vaccine is covered by Medicare (code 90670)

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