

PNEUMOCOCCAL INFECTION

Pneumococcus (also called *Streptococcus pneumoniae*) is a common cause of ear infections but 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 the person to become ill. 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 (site) of infection.

CONTAGIOUS PERIOD

Unknown.

DIAGNOSIS

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

EXCLUSION

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

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 infections. 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.
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water after contact with secretions from the nose or mouth. Thorough hand washing 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.

For more information, please contact your local health department.

[Southern Nevada Health District](#) (Clark County) 775-759-1300 (24 hours)

[Northern Nevada Public Health](#) (Washoe County) 775-328-2447 (24 hours)

[Carson City Health & Human Services](#) (Carson City, Douglas, Lyon Counties) 775-887-2190 (24 hours)

[Division of Public and Behavioral Health](#) (All other Counties) 775-400-0333 (24 hours)

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