

PNEUMOCOCCAL INFECTIONS



WHAT IS IT?

Pneumococcal bacteria can cause various invasive (meningitis, bacteremic pneumonia and bacteremia) and non-invasive (pneumonia, otitis, sinusitis, and bronchitis) infections caused by any serotype of the bacterium *Streptococcus pneumoniae*. (21)

SYMPTOMS

- Pneumococcal pneumonia is the most common form of bacterial pneumonia. Symptoms include high fever, chills, and a productive cough accompanied by pulmonary pain and breathing difficulties. Pneumococcal pneumonia is frequently associated with bacteremia (i.e., the presence of bacteria in the blood).
- The associated mortality is increased by the presence of pre-existing risk factors such as underlying disease, malnutrition or age.
- Symptoms of pneumococcal meningitis are undistinguishable from those of other bacterial meningitis and include fever, headaches, vomiting, and stiffness of the neck. The associated mortality is high, especially among infants and the elderly.

EPIDEMIOLOGY AND VACCINATION

- Pneumococci are transmitted by direct contact with respiratory secretions of infected patients or healthy carriers. Pneumococcal infections occur in all age groups, but their severity is highest in the very young and elderly.
- Pneumococcal infections are significant in both developing and industrialized countries. (21)
- Several types of pneumococcal vaccine are available.

References:

21 - Pneumococcal vaccines. WHO position paper. WER 2003; 78(14):110-119: http://www.who.int/immunization/wer7814pneumococcal_Apr03_position_paper.pdf