

**Ministry of Health
and Long-Term Care**

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**Ministère de la Santé
et des Soins de longue durée**

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Dear Doctor/Health Care Provider:

RE: HIGH-RISK PNEUMOCOCCAL IMMUNIZATION PROGRAM, 2009/10

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with information regarding:

- Recommendations for pneumococcal vaccine during the Influenza A (H1N1) pandemic; and
- The two pneumococcal vaccines (pneumococcal polysaccharide and pneumococcal conjugate) as part of the ongoing High-risk Pneumococcal Immunization Program.

The publicly funded High-risk Pneumococcal Immunization Program supports the immunization of persons identified by the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) as being at increased risk for invasive pneumococcal disease.

Influenza A (H1N1) Pandemic

During the pandemic of novel influenza A (H1N1), vaccination of all persons at increased risk for invasive *Streptococcus pneumoniae* with pneumococcal vaccine is highly recommended, and may reduce the risk of illness and death due to complications of influenza. All persons with high risk conditions should be vaccinated according to the Publicly Funded Immunization Schedules for Ontario – January 2009, particularly those persons less than 65 years old who are at increased risk for influenza A (H1N1).

Due to novel influenza A (H1N1) activity in Canada, and the potential for secondary infection with *S. pneumoniae*, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care is recommending that eligible persons should be vaccinated against pneumococcal disease over the summer, according to the *Publicly Funded Immunization Schedules for Ontario – January 2009*, and before the seasonal influenza campaign.

Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine High Risk program

In addition to the routine program for all children under two years of age, the pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (currently Prevnar[®]) program for high-risk children are 24 to 59 months of age is available to all children with specific medical conditions that put them at high risk for invasive pneumococcal disease (please see attached fact sheet).

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Pneumococcal Polysaccharide Vaccine

The pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine is publicly funded for high-risk persons two years of age to 64 years old, who have the relevant high-risk medical conditions/risk factors (please see the attached Fact sheet), all residents of long-term care homes, and all persons aged 65 years and older.

Only one pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine for the publicly funded program will be available this year, the Pneumovax[®] 23 vaccine, manufactured by Merck Frosst Canada Ltd.

Only a single shot is generally recommended for persons with high risk conditions.

Needle Safety Legislation

Facilities/institutions named in the Needle Safety Regulation¹ under the Occupational Health and Safety Act² are required to use safety engineered needles.

Vaccine Packaging/Format

The Pneumovax[®] 23 vaccine is supplied in a package with 10 single-dose vials without a syringe and needle.

The product monograph for Pneumovax 23 is available on the Merck Frosst website at <http://www.merckfrosst.ca/mfcl/en/corporate/products/pneumovax23.html>.

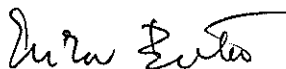
The Prevnar[®] vaccine is supplied in a package with 10 single -dose syringes without needles. The product monograph for Prevnar[®] is available at: [http://www.wyeth.ca/en/products/Product%20Monographs%20PDFs/Prevnar PM Dec 22 2008 sub Jan 8 2009.pdf](http://www.wyeth.ca/en/products/Product%20Monographs%20PDFs/Prevnar_PM_Dec_22_2008_sub_Jan_8_2009.pdf).

The pneumococcal vaccines can be ordered in the usual manner as for other publicly funded vaccines.

The Pneumococcal High-Risk Immunization Program Fact Sheet is available on the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) website at: http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/pub/pub_menus/pub_immun.html.

Should you have any questions about the high-risk pneumococcal immunization program and/or the vaccines, please contact your local public health unit.

Sincerely,



Erika Bontovics, MD,FFPH, CIC
Manager
Prevention and Control Section

Attachment: Fact sheet for physicians and other health care providers

¹ Needle Safety Regulation Available at: http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws_regs_070474_e.htm

² Occupational Health and Safety Act Available at: http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_90c01_e.htm