

# Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine

## **Pneumococcal infection**

Pneumococcal infection represents a wide range of diseases caused by the bacterium *Streptococcus pneumoniae* (*S. pneumoniae* / *pneumococcus*). More than 90 serotypes have been identified. It can be transmitted by droplet spread and contact with respiratory secretions; direct contact is another way of transmission.

*S. pneumoniae* causes a wide spectrum of diseases, including:

- meningitis: it is a severe type of pneumococcal infection and usually presents with fever, stiff neck and mental confusion, causing long-term problems, such as hearing loss, or even death;
- pneumonia: it commonly presents with fever, shortness of breath, chills and productive cough, and may result in death in severe cases; and
- otitis media: it presents with fever, ear pain with or without ear discharge, and may lead to hearing loss in recurrent cases.

Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine (PCV)

### **A. Why get vaccinated?**

Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV) can effectively protect against severe invasive infections due to the serotypes of *S. pneumoniae* contained in the vaccine. Children aged below 2 years are at risk to severe invasive pneumococcal infection (i.e. meningitis, bacteraemic pneumonia and septicaemia) and are advised to get vaccinated.

### **B. When should my child get vaccinated?**

A child is advised to receive 3 doses of PCV in the first year of life (at 2 months, 4 months and 6 months old), and another booster dose at 12 months old.

### **C. Who should NOT get PCV or should wait?**

- serious allergic reaction to previous dose of PCV
- serious allergic reaction to diphtheria toxoid containing vaccine

### **D. What are the Risks?**

As with any medicine, PCV carries a small risk of adverse reaction. Most people have no serious reactions after receiving PCV. Occasionally there may be mild fever (usually occur within 3 days after vaccination) or slight redness or swelling around the injection site, but these will gradually subside in a few days. If fever or discomforts persist, or abnormal breathing is observed, please consult a doctor immediately.

***E. How many types of PCV are available in HK and what are their protection?***

There are more than one types of Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine (PCV) available in the market of Hong Kong. They are safe and effective in preventing invasive pneumococcal diseases while no one PCV can cover all serotypes of *Streptococcus pneumoniae*. Personal hygiene is also an important preventive measure.

If you have any query, please ask the nurses or doctors at our Maternal & Child Health Centre of the Department of Health.