



Tuesday, February 4, 2025

Protect Yourself and Your Loved Ones from Strep Pneumonia

The Office of the northern Medical Health Officers for the Saskatchewan Health Authority, the Athabasca Health Authority and the Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority, are advising northern residents about the spread of pneumonia in our northern Saskatchewan. We hope that this message can help protect you and your loved ones!

What is Strep Pneumonia?

It is caused by the bacteria *Streptococcus pneumoniae*. It can lead to serious illnesses, including:

- Pneumonia (lung infection)
- Meningitis (infection of the brain lining)
- Sepsis (blood infection)
- Ear and sinus infections

It spreads through coughing, sneezing, and close contact.

Who is at Risk?

All are at risk, but some groups are at higher risk, including:

- Infants and young children
- Adults aged 65 and older
- People with chronic illnesses (like diabetes, heart, or lung disease)
- Those with weakened immune systems
- Some inhaled drugs (like cocaine) can make the body get sick easier!

Symptoms to Watch For:

- **Pneumonia:** Fever, chills, cough, difficulty breathing
- **Meningitis:** Stiff neck, headache, sensitivity to light, confusion
- **Sepsis:** Fever, rapid heart rate, confusion, extreme weakness

If you or your loved one are experiencing these symptoms, please seek care immediately. You may either call to make a same-day appointment at the La Ronge Medical Clinic or go to the La Ronge Health Centre Emergency Department. **Do not wait – these infections can progress very quickly!**

How to Protect Yourself:

1. Get Vaccinated:

- Vaccines protect against pneumococcal disease (pneumonia).
- Talk to your healthcare provider about the right vaccine for you and your family.
- This is different than the COVID-19 and influenza (flu) vaccines that we get every year – as an adult, some people are able to get the pneumonia vaccine for free (list at the end of this letter)

2. Practice Good Hygiene:

- Wash your hands regularly with soap and water.
- Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.
- If you are feeling sick, or are around other people who are sick, please wear a facemask!
- Avoid close contact with sick individuals.

3. Stay Healthy:

- Maintain a healthy diet and stay physically active.
- Manage chronic health conditions.
- Avoid smoking and drug use as it damages your lungs and increases your risk.
- If you are using drugs like crack cocaine or crystal meth, please do not share your needles, pipes, or other items.
- Contact community clinics like Jeannie Bird Clinic which has a clean supply of pipes and other items, as well as resources to help you stop using drugs if you are ready.

4. If you are over 65 or have any chronic health conditions, please contact your healthcare provider to determine if you are eligible for the pneumonia vaccine

Sincerely,

Dr. David Edward-Ooi Poon
MHO, Northern Medical Services

Dr. Angela Silveira
MHO, Northern Medical Services

Dr. Nnamdi Ndubuka
MHO, Northern-Inter-Tribal Health Authority

Healthy People, Healthy Saskatchewan

The Saskatchewan Health Authority works in the spirit of truth and reconciliation, acknowledging Saskatchewan as the traditional territory of First Nations and Métis People.

NOTICE OF CONFIDENTIALITY: This information is for the recipient(s) listed and is considered confidential by law. If you are not the intended recipient, any use, disclosure, copying or communication of the contents is strictly prohibited.