
Executive summary

Health Council of the Netherlands. Pneumococcal vaccine in elderly adults and risk groups. The Hague: Health Council of the Netherlands, 2003; publication no. 2003/10

At present, pneumococcal vaccination is not carried out on any great scale in the Netherlands. Among adults, the vaccine is administered only to individuals who are at substantially increased risk of pneumococcal infection. These include asplenia patients, people with low immunity and those suffering from Hodgkin's disease. At the request of the Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport, a Health Council committee has examined the scientific desirability of making vaccination available to additional groups of adults. In particular, the Minister wished to know whether the Council would advise combining pneumococcal vaccination with the annual influenza vaccination made available to over-sixty-fives.

On the basis of an assessment of the scientific evidence undertaken for the Health Council by the Dutch Cochrane Centre, the Committee has concluded that extension of the indication for pneumococcal vaccination is not scientifically justified under the present circumstances. Little can yet be added to the information presented in the Council's 1982 report on this subject.

The scientific evidence currently available does not suggest that combined influenza and pneumococcal vaccination is advisable for over-sixty-fives. Nevertheless, the Committee wishes to see comparative research conducted to shed more light on this matter.

With regard to pneumococcal vaccination for people with particular conditions, the Committee's recommendations are on three levels:

- Vaccination is definitely recommended only for people in groups with a very high mortality risk. These include people suffering from asplenia, sickle-cell anaemia or liquor leakage. Everyone in these groups should be inoculated against pneumococci and should always have antibiotics at their disposal.
- Vaccination should be considered, taking account of the circumstances of the individual case, for people suffering from Hodgkin's disease, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, HIV, myeloma, chronic lymphatic leukaemia, an autoimmune condition, renal disease or alcoholism, cirrosis, as well as for people receiving immunosuppressives or who have undergone bone marrow or organ transplantation.
- Vaccination is not recommended for people diagnosed with hypogammaglobulinemia or agammaglobulinemia, solid tumours, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease or chronic heart failure. The Committee does nevertheless recommend careful research into the last three risk groups, with particular attention focused on the vaccine type.