Pneumococcal vaccine
Catch-up programme for children under two years of age

- Meningitis
- Blood poisoning
- Pneumonia
- Ear infections

Inmunisation
The safest way to protect your child
Introduction
From September 2006, pneumococcal (pronounced new-mo-cock-al) conjugate vaccine (PCV) is being introduced into the routine childhood immunisation programme at two, four and thirteen months of age to protect children from pneumococcal infection. This means that there is a large group of children under two who will be unprotected as they will already have had their primary immunisations without PCV. A catch-up programme is therefore being provided to protect these children. This leaflet briefly describes the disease and the programme.

What is pneumococcal infection?
Pneumococcal infection can cause pneumonia, septicaemia (blood poisoning) and meningitis. Children under two years of age are particularly at risk from this infection. The UK’s routine immunisation programme now offers protection against this infection.

Because your child is under two, he or she is being offered this vaccine (PCV). Children over one will only need one dose of the vaccine. Children under one will be offered two doses.

Do I need to do anything to get my child vaccinated?
No. Your local surgery or child health department will send you an appointment to bring your child for the PCV vaccine.

Can my child get pneumococcal disease from the vaccination?
No. PCV is not a live vaccine so there is no risk of your child getting pneumococcal infection from the vaccination.
Will there be any side-effects from the vaccine?

There are no known serious side effects of PCV vaccine. There may be some swelling or redness where the injection is given – this usually lasts no longer than 24 hours. Your child may have a slight temperature and be a little unwell. If this happens, give your child plenty of cool drinks and some paracetamol or ibuprofen liquid. Always read the instructions on the bottle carefully and give the correct dose for the age of your child. This is especially important for ibuprofen liquid, where some dosages are only appropriate for children at certain ages and weights.

Remember, never give medicines that contain aspirin to children under 16.

Are there any reasons why my child shouldn’t have PCV?

There very few medical reasons why your child should not have PCV vaccine. If your child has a minor illness without a fever, such as a cold, they should have their immunisations as normal. If your child is ill with a fever, put off the immunisation until they have recovered. This is to avoid the fever being associated with the vaccine, or the vaccine increasing the fever your child already has. If your child:

- has a bleeding disorder
- has had a fit not associated with fever, or
- has ever had a bad reaction to any of their previous immunisations,

speak to your doctor, practice nurse or health visitor before your child has any immunisation.

Does my child have to have the PCV vaccination?

In the UK, parents can decide whether to have their children immunised or not. PCV is strongly recommended as it will offer your child important extra protection against serious diseases.
Where can I get more information about PCV?

If you want further information about PCV please visit:

www.immunisation.nhs.uk

or speak to your health visitor, practice nurse or doctor, or get the leaflet A guide to childhood immunisations for babies up to 13 months of age from your doctor’s surgery or clinic.