

## Quality of Care – *Pneumococcal Vaccinations*

Pneumococcal disease, including pneumococcal pneumonia, is caused by the bacterium *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, which can infect the lungs (pneumonia), brain (meningitis), ears and bloodstream (bacteremia). Pneumococcal disease can be very serious and is a major cause of morbidity (illness) and mortality (death) especially in people age 65 and older and patients with co-morbid conditions. An additional problem is that multi-drug-resistant pneumococci are common and increasing, making it more difficult and expensive to treat.


However, pneumococcal infections are preventable. Vaccinations represent the best preventive defense we have against pneumococcal infections. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practice (ACIP) recommends vaccinations for all individuals 65 years of age and older, individuals 2 years of age or older with underlying medical conditions, immuno-compromised people 2 years of age and older, and those who meet criteria who are unsure of their prior vaccination status.

Gifford Medical Center has been working very hard to implement the CMS guidelines to ensure that all patients admitted to the hospital with pneumonia have had or are given the pneumococcal vaccine before discharge. Gifford additionally has been tracking the immunization rate for patients with diabetes.

The hospital recognized that it was time to take the next step, also endorsed by CMS, to ensure that all eligible patients Gifford sees in its outpatient practices or who are admitted to the hospital receive the vaccine. It is with that goal in mind that Gifford has instituted a new guideline for providers (including nurses, doctors, nurse practitioners and physician assistants) to assess every patient’s pneumococcal immunization status and administer the vaccine to eligible patients. Once vaccinated, the patients are given a yellow card recording that immunization so that the patient can inform future caregivers of their immunization.

The card looks like this:

Bring this card with you to  
all healthcare visits.

 Gifford Medical Center

My Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Immunization Record**

| Vaccine Name    | Mo/Day/Yr Given | Date Next Due |
|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Pneumococcal    |                 |               |
| Influenza (Flu) |                 | Yearly:       |
|                 |                 |               |
|                 |                 |               |
|                 |                 |               |

You can do your part by asking your provider about your pneumococcal vaccination status, requesting the vaccination if appropriate, and always carrying your yellow immunization record card with you to present to subsequent caregivers.