



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

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12th. November 2020

Deputy Gino Kenny
TD
Dail Eireann
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

PQ Question34546/20: To ask the Minister for Health if there is evidence of a general lack of awareness of the pneumococcal vaccination in the at-risk population and if so, if there are plans to address this with a public health awareness campaign similar to that of the availability and importance of the flu vaccine for these groups; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Kenny,

The above PQ has been directed to my department for direct response to you on same.

There are two different vaccines are available in Ireland:

- . PCV13 which has been in the childhood schedule since 2010 (from 2008-2010 this was PCV7), which protects against 13 serotypes of pneumococcal disease. This is also recommended for some people at increased risk of pneumococcal disease.
- . PPV23 is a polysaccharide vaccine which has been available in Ireland for those over 65 years and in groups at increased risk of pneumococcal disease since 1996 and protects against 23 serotypes of pneumococcal disease.

In Ireland, one dose of PPV23 vaccine is recommended to be given to anyone aged 65 years and older. Booster doses are not recommended for those aged over 65 years. This is because the immune response to the first dose of PPV23 may blunt the immune response to a subsequent dose and therefore actually may reduce the clinical protection from PPV23 due to lower antibody levels. PPV23 is also recommended to be given to people in groups who are more at risk of pneumococcal disease. This includes those with asplenia, chronic renal, lung, liver and heart conditions, current cancer patients and those with CSF leaks. For most of these groups, only one dose of PPV23 is required at the time of diagnosis, and then one further dose is given once they reach the age of 65 years (and at least 5 years after the last dose).

Those people with conditions where the immune response decreases more rapidly can receive a booster dose of PPV23 at least 5 years after the first dose.

No one aged 65 years and over should be given more than one dose of PPV23 regardless of their immune status.

The majority of people eligible for the PPV23 vaccine only require one dose of vaccine within their lifetime. Those with certain conditions require two doses in their lifetime and a small minority require three doses in their lifetime.

The National Immunisation Office has procured PPV23 vaccine for the national immunisation programme since 2005.

Distribution data shows that sufficient doses of PPV23 have been delivered for those eligible and there have been no recent changes to the eligible groups.

There is therefore no evidence that there is a lack of awareness about the vaccination for those eligible and no promotion campaign is currently planned.

I trust that this information will be of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Kelleher', with a horizontal line underneath.

DR. KEVIN KELLEHER, FFPHM, FFPHMI
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