

Bill Hogan
Commissioner
P.O. Box 110601
Juneau, AK 99811-0601
www.hss.state.ak.us



Press Release

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Contact: Greg Wilkinson, (907) 269-7285, Cell (907) 382-7032
gregory.wilkinson@alaska.gov
Dawnell Smith, (907) 269-4541 dawnell.smith@alaska.gov

State releases new guidelines for pneumonia vaccine

(Anchorage, AK) — The Alaska Division of Public Health, Section of Epidemiology, has issued new guidelines on when people should receive the pneumococcal polysaccharide (pneumonia) vaccine.

The state's new recommendations are based on updated guidelines from the national Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices.

The new recommendations include:

- vaccinating adults between the ages of 19 and 64 years who are cigarette smokers or who have asthma;
- lowering the recommended age of vaccination for Alaska Native adults from 55 to 50;
- raising the age before an otherwise healthy non-Native Alaskan adult would receive a routine pneumonia immunization from 55 to 65 to be consistent with national guidelines; and
- providing one-time revaccination at least 5 years after any previous dose for those who were immunized before age 65.

“These recommendations are consistent with the current national guidelines,” state epidemiologist Dr. Joe McLaughlin said. “They were developed to protect those who are at highest risk for invasive pneumococcal disease.”

Other changes to the state's pneumonia vaccination recommendations may be found at: http://www.epi.hss.state.ak.us/bulletins/docs/b2009_24.pdf

Anyone with questions should consult his or her health-care provider.

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