



Germany Country Report 2022

Influencing Adult Pneumonia Vaccination Policy

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Contents

Background	1
Pneumonia Vaccine Policy in Germany	1
Government Pneumonia Vaccine Information	2
Robert Koch Institute	2
Vaccination Calendar	2
Web pages	2
Educational Information Sheet	2
Federal Centre for Health Education	2
Web pages	2
Infographics	3
Non-Government Pneumonia Vaccine Information	3
Respiratory Health Organisations	3
COPD Deutschland	3
German Respiratory League	3
Patient Organization Pulmonary Emphysema	3
COPD Germany	3
Status of National Pneumonia Vaccination Messaging	4
References	6

Background

In Germany, approximately 30% of the population is 60 years old or over. By 2050, the number of older people is expected to rise, representing 36.7% of the total population.¹ An ageing population is also associated with an increase prevalence of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) which result in an increased burden on health care systems. In Germany, NCDs account for 91% of all deaths, including cardiovascular diseases, respiratory diseases, and diabetes (37%, 6%, 3% respectively).² Older people and adults experiencing NCDs are at risk of contracting and experiencing morbidity and mortality from vaccine preventable diseases (VPDs), including pneumococcal pneumonia.³

In 2017, deaths due to all-cause pneumonia were almost 12 times higher in those over 70 years old (168.56 per 100,000) compared with those 50 to 69 years old (13.57 per 100,000)^{4,5} Furthermore a 2015 study suggested that the rate of pneumonia is two times greater for those 60 years and over with at least one chronic condition and four times greater for immunocompromised older people.^{6,7} Community acquired pneumonia (CAP) causes significant morbidity and hospitalization in adults, with 280 000 adults in Germany hospitalized due to pneumonia in 2017.^{7,8}

These findings highlight the importance of pneumococcal vaccination to prevent and / or lessen the serious complications of pneumonia in older people and those with chronic conditions.

In Germany, pneumococcal vaccination is recommended for those 60 years and older, and adults with a chronic disease.⁹ Despite this recommendation, numerous studies have demonstrated uptake of pneumococcal vaccination in these at-risk populations is low.⁷ The PneuVUE study examining pneumonia vaccination in older adults in nine countries across Europe found that over 50% of Germans surveyed feel they are not at all informed on vaccination against pneumonia. Only 20% of higher risk adults have received their pneumonia vaccine, while 39% of the same group are regularly vaccinated against influenza.¹⁰

Pneumonia Vaccine Policy in Germany

In Germany, the Federal Ministry of Health establishes healthy policy. The Federal Institute for Infectious and Non-Communicable Diseases (Robert Koch Institute), an agency of the Ministry of Health, is charged with identification, surveillance and prevention of infectious diseases.¹¹ The Robert Koch Institute is advised by the Standing Committee on Vaccinations (Ständige Impfkommision [STIKO]), an independent committee of experts which takes into account risks and benefits for individuals and also at a population level.¹² All vaccinations recommended by STIKO are covered by statutory health insurance.¹³ The Federal Centre for Health Education (Bundeszentrale für gesundheitliche Aufklärung [BZgA]) is a higher federal authority in the Ministry of Health, responsible for prevention and health promotion. Their functions include execution of campaigns, programs and projects related to vaccination.¹⁴

In Germany, pneumococcal vaccination (23-valent polysaccharide vaccine) is recommended for adults over the age of 60 years and those with chronic disease, such as diseases of the lungs or heart, diabetes or neurological diseases.¹⁵ For older adults and those with chronic diseases, STIKO recommends repeat vaccinations every 6 years.¹⁵



Government Pneumonia Vaccine Information

Robert Koch Institute

The Robert Koch Institute (RKI) provides information on a variety of vaccination topics, vaccine side effects, elimination programs and research projects. The RKI also shares STIKO recommendations on the implementation of vaccinations.¹⁶

Vaccination Calendar

The vaccination calendar indicates pneumococcal vaccination as a standard vaccine for those over 60 years old (Figure 1).¹⁷ The calendar is also available in multiple languages.¹⁸

Web pages

The Vaccinations A-Z web page allows users to visit specific web pages by vaccine. The web page “Vaccination against pneumococci” shares information on the vaccination calendar, recommendations from STIKO, epidemiological bulletins, vaccination quotas and frequently asked questions.¹⁹

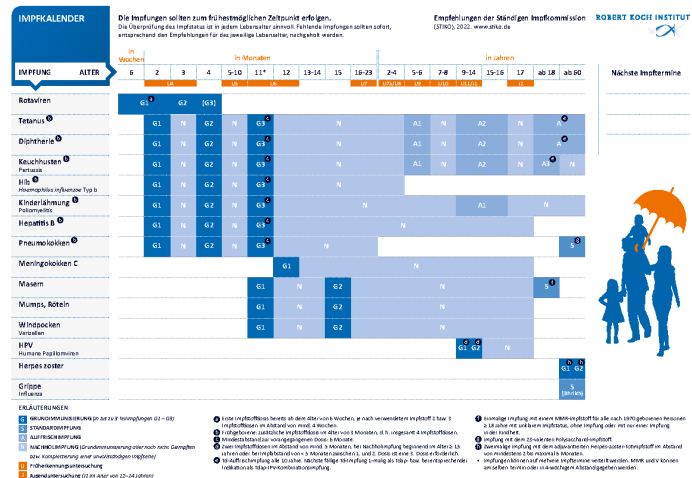


Figure 1. Immunization schedule from the Robert Koch Institute.

The frequently asked questions page provides information on who should be vaccinated, how the pneumococcal vaccines available differ, and how often people should be vaccinated.¹⁵ Links to web pages on pneumococcal vaccination can also be found via a web page title “Pneumococcal infections (Streptococcus pneumoniae)”, under the Infectious diseases A-Z web page.²⁰

Educational Information Sheet

The RKI provides information sheets, written in different languages, on pneumococcal vaccination.²¹ Material on pneumococcal infections, the vaccine, who should be vaccinated and reactions after the vaccination are included.²¹

Federal Centre for Health Education

The Federal Centre for Health Education (BZgA) provides information on vaccines and vaccination recommendations on a dedicated website (impfen-info.de).²²

Web pages

The web page “Pneumococcal Vaccination in Adults” provides material on pneumococcal infection, the course of the disease, and vaccination. The web page focuses specifically on recommendations for at-risk adults.⁹ There is also a page dedicated to frequently asked questions surrounding pneumococcal vaccination.²³

The BZgA has a comprehensive health campaign on influenza vaccination for people over 60 years.

Pneumokokken-Impfung bei Erwachsenen



Pneumokokken-Erkrankungen werden durch Bakterien aus der Familie der Streptokokken hervorgerufen. Sie sind weltweit verbreitet und werden von Mensch zu Mensch übertragen. Je nach Region der Welt und abhängig vom Alter sind verschiedene Pneumokokken-Stämme für unterschiedliche Krankheiten mit zum Teil lebensbedrohlichen Verläufen verantwortlich. So

verursachen sie beispielsweise die Mehrzahl aller bakteriellen Lungenentzündungen.

Figure 2. Web page on pneumococcal vaccination for adults from the Federal Centre for Health Education.



The web page “Flu vaccination for people over 60” mentions pneumococcal vaccination should be checked at the same time as influenza vaccination.²⁴

Infographics

BZgA has additional infographics on vaccination, infectious diseases, the immune system and a vaccination calendar, which highlights the recommendations for pneumococcal vaccination.²⁵ There are no infographics specifically focusing on pneumococcal vaccination.

The website on vaccine information has a media library, including videos, infographics and audio media. Despite the many resources, there is no content from the BZgA dedicated to pneumococcal vaccination. The BZgA’s media database on vaccination collects nationwide material on vaccination from various providers. When searching for information on pneumococcal infection and vaccination, only 17 records mention pneumococcal vaccination and none of the resources relate specifically to pneumococcal vaccination for high-risk adult populations.²⁶

Non-Government Pneumonia Vaccine Information

Respiratory Health Organisations

COPD Deutschland

COPD Deutschland provides brochures for patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) which include information on pneumococcal vaccination, such as “Vaccination prophylaxis for COPD”, “COPD and possible comorbidities” and “Viruses or bacteria: antibiotics necessary, yes ... but when?”.²⁷

German Respiratory League

The German Respiratory League informs patients and the public on respiratory diseases and supports prophylaxis and early detection programs.²⁸ The League has a number of web pages recommending pneumococcal vaccination for patients with various respiratory diseases such as COPD,²⁹ asthma,³⁰ and older adults.^{31,32}

Patient Organization Pulmonary Emphysema COPD Germany

Patient Organization Pulmonary Emphysema COPD Germany aims to provide patients with knowledge on various respiratory diseases and therapies.³³ The website has a number of web pages and articles on pneumococcal vaccination recommendations and updates for at-risk patients and older adults.³⁴










Status of National Pneumonia Vaccination Messaging

Table 1 presents a comparison of the pneumonia vaccine schedule and messaging in Germany to that of influenza as described in Changing the Conversation on Adult Influenza Vaccination (CCAV).³⁵ CCAV identifies seven components of effective adult influenza campaigns which have been used to evaluate pneumonia vaccination messaging.³⁶

Table 1. Status of pneumonia vaccination messaging and comparison to influenza vaccination messaging in Germany.

■ Well-developed
 ■ Partially developed
 ■ Not yet developed/No evidence

	Description	Influenza	Pneumonia
Comprehensive policies and programs	Influenza vaccination is recommended by government and advisory bodies for at-risk populations including older adults and people with chronic diseases.	■	■ Pneumococcal vaccination is recommended by governments and advisory bodies for adults over 60 and adults with chronic diseases.
	Vaccination is funded under the National Immunization Program (NIP) and administered through the state program for at-risk populations including older adults and people with chronic disease.	■	■ Pneumococcal vaccination and other recommended vaccinations are covered by statutory health insurance companies.
Clear communication strategy	Published context-specific communication strategy and action plan which defines communication goals, target audiences, expected roles of partner organizations, communication tools and timeline.	■	■ No evidence of published action plan for communication on pneumococcal vaccination.
Well-defined audience	Universal message distributed to undifferentiated populations (general audiences regardless of age and underlying health condition).	■	■ Pneumococcal vaccination messaging prioritizes at-risk groups, particularly adults over 60.
	Dedicated and tailored information for specific at-risk audience.	■	■
Multiple tools and channels	Online communication such as web content, digital technology, social media, online publications, email.	■	■ Information on pneumococcal vaccination is most often available via online web pages, which require active searching. With the exception of material produced by the Federal Centre for Health Education, web pages are often not easy to navigate for clear, concise information on recommended vaccine groups.
	Messages are disseminated offline by TV, radio, printout (e.g., leaflet, poster, brochure, outdoor ads).	■	■ There is no evidence of offline or interactive messaging campaigns.
	Interactive communication including individual consultation, street campaign and face-to-face mobilization.	■	■

Realistic timeline	Timely vaccination reminder.		 No evidence of vaccination reminder in the winter months or intensive campaigns surrounding key awareness events.
	National/regional events scheduled for intensive awareness campaign such as national vaccination day/week/month.		
Regular updates of information	Information is updated on a regular basis to reflect the most recent evidence and policy, such as recommending newly licensed vaccines for specific recipient.		 Information on pneumococcal vaccination reflects most recent evidence on both pneumococcal vaccines available and scheduling of doses. Epidemiology bulletins and evidence used in STIKO decision making is released and updated frequently.
Engagement of civil society	Communication by patient associations, ageing organizations and advocacy groups.		 Groups provide web pages and online resources on pneumococcal vaccination, however robust campaigns are lacking. Organizations representing key groups often omit information on vaccination. For example, in Germany, patient organizations focusing on heart health, diabetes or ageing do not provide information pneumococcal vaccination despite its recommendation for these groups.

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