



Recommendations on Vaccination for Adults with Chronic Respiratory Disease

September 2025

General Summary

Why should you get vaccinated?

People with chronic respiratory diseases like COPD or asthma can get much sicker from respiratory infections than healthy people (1). In autumn and winter, colds and flu are common. You can catch viruses like influenza (flu), COVID-19, and RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus). These infections can make your breathing problems worse. You may cough more, feel short of breath, or even need to go to the hospital. Vaccines train your body to fight viruses. This means you may not get sick at all, or if you do, your illness will be milder. Vaccination is one of the best ways to avoid hospital admission and keep your respiratory disease from getting worse.

This guide is for adults with chronic respiratory diseases, such as:

- Asthma (especially if you need daily medicine)
- COPD
- Lung fibrosis
- Sarcoidosis
- Bronchiectasis

If you are not sure if you have a long-term lung disease, ask your doctor.

Which vaccines should you get

There are different vaccines that protect you from viruses and bacteria that provide more risks for people with chronic respiratory disease.

Flu vaccine

The flu vaccine protects you from the influenza virus, which comes back every year. If you have a respiratory disease, the flu can give you breathing problems, high fever, and sometimes lung infection. The vaccine lowers your chance of flu and serious illness. Your General Practitioner (GP) offers this vaccine for free every autumn. Almost everyone with a chronic respiratory disease will get an invitation (2).

COVID-19

COVID-19 is caused by the coronavirus. People with respiratory disease can get very sick, sometimes needing hospital care or suffering long-term symptoms. The COVID-19 vaccine is offered in autumn by the GGD (Public Health Service).

- People 60+ get an invitation automatically.
- People 50-59 with chronic respiratory disease can book their own appointment at the GGD.
- Under 50? Ask your doctor if you need the vaccine (3).

Pneumococcal vaccine

Pneumococci are bacteria that can cause pneumonia and other illnesses. For people with a chronic respiratory disease, this infection can be very serious (4). Everyone aged 60+ will be invited by their GP for the PCV20 vaccine. If you are younger than 60 but have a chronic respiratory disease, you should also get this vaccine. Ask your doctor when and where to get it. This vaccine protects you for several years.

RSV

RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus) usually causes mild cold symptoms, but in older adults or people with chronic respiratory diseases, it can cause pneumonia and hospital admission(5). This vaccine is recommended for people 60+ with chronic respiratory disease (6). If you are younger than 60 but have serious chronic respiratory disease, ask your doctor if this vaccine is right for you. You can get it from the GGD, a travel clinic, or your GP. Important: at the moment, you have to pay for this vaccine yourself (this may change in the future).

How were these recommendations developed?

The recommendations were written by a group of pulmonologists, GPs, pharmacists, scientists, and patient organisations like the Lung Foundation. They reviewed the latest studies about pulmonary infections, severity of illness and how well vaccines work. Based on this, they created advice to help you protect yourself.

Where can you get help?

Do you have questions about vaccines? Not sure which ones you need? Talk to your pulmonologist or GP. They can advise you.

You can also find more information at www.longvaccinaties.nl.

References

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Research Summary

The number of patients with chronic respiratory diseases, such as COPD and asthma, is increasing. These patients have an increased risk of respiratory tract infections and a greater likelihood of severe symptoms, which can lead to hospitalization and/or reduced quality of life. Prevention of these infections through vaccination is therefore of particular importance for this patient population. In the Netherlands, influenza vaccination is currently offered to all adults with chronic respiratory disease, and COVID-19 vaccination to patients with chronic respiratory diseases ≥ 50 years of age. Pneumococcal vaccination is also available for all adults from 60 years onwards. However, there are more vaccines on the market than are currently available through public health programmes.

In this guideline, additional vaccinations against the following pathogens have been further investigated: pneumococci, *Haemophilus influenzae*, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), pertussis, and Group B streptococci. The recommendations were based on literature regarding disease burden, vaccine effectiveness within the general population and specifically for patients with chronic respiratory diseases, and international guidelines. The assessment and evaluation were conducted by a multidisciplinary working group.

The disease burden regarding hospitalizations was estimated as substantial for pneumococci and RSV. For pertussis and *H. influenzae*, the disease burden was estimated as very low, and for Group B streptococci, insufficient data were available to make an assessment.

Subsequently, vaccine effectiveness was investigated. Based on the scientific literature, there is sufficient evidence that pneumococcal vaccination provides protection against hospitalizations and exacerbations, with conjugate vaccines (PCV) offering higher and longer-lasting protection than polysaccharide vaccines. RSV vaccines have only recently entered the market but demonstrate protective effects against severe disease and hospitalizations in both clinical studies and real-world practice. The effectiveness of pertussis vaccine in adults is uncertain and insufficiently substantiated. Evidence for the effectiveness of vaccination against *H. influenzae* is very limited, and vaccination against Group B streptococci remains in the experimental phase.

Clinical Recommendations

Vaccination	Patients with chronic respiratory disease* aged 18-59 years	Patients with chronic respiratory disease* aged 60 years and older
Influenza	Influenza vaccination is recommended for all patients with chronic respiratory diseases within the National Influenza Prevention Programme, in accordance with the Health Council's recommendation (2). These patients will receive an annual invitation from their general practitioner.	
COVID-19	COVID-19 vaccination is recommended for patients aged 50-59 years. Patients under 50 may be considered for vaccination in consultation with their treating physician. Eligible patients can schedule an appointment with the Municipal Health Service (GGD) in the autumn. This recommendation is reviewed annually by the Health Council.	COVID-19 vaccination is recommended; patients aged 60 and older are invited by the GGD for the autumn campaign. This recommendation is reviewed annually by the Health Council.
Pneumococcal	PCV20 or higher is recommended.	PCV20 is recommended, as implemented within the National Adult Pneumococcal Vaccination Programme (from autumn 2025).
RSV	The risk of severe progression of RSV infection in adult patients younger than 60 years is generally considered low. RSV vaccination in patients aged 50-59 years may be considered in patients with severe pulmonary conditions based on physicians judgment. This vaccine is currently not reimbursed, so patients have to pay for the vaccine themselves	Vaccination is recommended. This vaccine is currently not reimbursed, so patients have to pay for the vaccine themselves.



Long Alliantie Nederland
Stationsplein 125
3818 LE Amersfoort
T. 033-421 84 18
info@longalliantie.nl

www.longalliantie.nl
www.longvaccinaties.nl