INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL
***Pneumococcal* Disease Patient Information**

What is *Pneumococcus*?

Streptococcus pneumoniae, or *pneumococcus*, is a germ (bacterium) that often causes infections, especially in children. It can cause diseases such as ear and sinus infections, pneumonia, brain swelling (meningitis) and blood infections. The disease may be very mild to very severe.

How do people get disease with *Pneumococcus?*

Pneumococcus can live in the back of the throat and nose in healthy people, without causing illness. However in people who are at risk, including the elderly, small children and people with long term illness, the bacteria can spread to other parts of the body and cause disease. *Pneumococcus* can also be spread by contact with an infected person's droplets from the nose or mouth when they are sneezing, coughing or talking. Illness spreading among casual contacts is rare.

How does the *Pneumococcus* germ make people sick?

There are two main types of Pneumococcal diseases: non-invasive and invasive**.** Non-invasive diseases occur outside the brain or the blood, and include ear and sinus infections and lung infections (pneumonia). Invasive diseases tend to be more serious and occur in the brain, or blood.

What are the symptoms of an infection with *Pneumococcal disease?*

The symptoms depend on the kind of infection, but fever is common for all types of infection. Symptoms of pneumonia may include a cough and shortness of breath; symptoms of meningitis are likely to include headache, stiff neck and fever.

Can infections with the *Pneumococcus* germ be treated?

Yes, antibiotics are used to treat infections. Serious infections will require intravenous (IV) antibiotics given directly into the bloodstream. There is a vaccination available to prevent serious Pneumococcal disease. It is recommended for children, healthy adults over 65 years, or adults who smoke, have a long-term disease, or live in a healthcare facility.

What does the hospital do to prevent the spread of the *Pneumococcus* germ?

Patient safety is very important. Hand washing is the most important way for everyone to prevent the spread of this germ and other germs. Be sure to clean your hands before eating and after using the toilet. Your visitors should also clean their hands upon entering and exiting your room.

What special precautions are needed at home?

Generally speaking, people in the hospital are sicker and get more infections than people in the community. At home, precautions do not need to be as strict. However, certain steps can help reduce the risk of spreading this germ to family members and other visitors.

Wash your hands for at least 15 seconds after using the toilet, before eating or before preparing food. Caregivers should wash their hands after providing care. Cover your cough with your sleeve not your hands. Wash your hands after blowing your nose. Gloves should be used to handle body fluids or dirty items. Discard disposable gloves in the regular garbage or clean rubber gloves after use.

No special precautions are required to clean your home. This germ can be destroyed by most household cleaning products or diluted household bleach. Wet a clean cloth thoroughly with a properly diluted cleaning product. Wipe surfaces starting from the cleanest area and moving towards the dirtiest area, paying special attention to areas such as the toilet and bathroom sink. Let the surfaces air dry. This will allow enough contact time with the cleaning product to kill the germ.

What do I need to know prior to discharge?

It is very important that you take all your medication as prescribed by your Doctor.

For specific recommendations about Pneumococcal vaccines and their use in preventing *Streptococcus pneumoniae* infections, please refer to your Family Physician.

If you have questions about the information in this document, contact Queensway Carleton Hospital's Infection Prevention and Control at 613-721-2000, ext. 3777.