

World Pneumonia Day

OSF HealthCare Newsroom

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It's not unusual to hear talk about increased cases of influenza or measles in children, but such discussions about pneumonia are less common. The fact is more than 800,000 children under the age of 5 worldwide died last year from pneumonia, with most deaths occurring in children under two years old. While most healthy children can fight off the infection, children with compromised immune systems from malnutrition or other factors are at high risk of developing pneumonia.

"Worldwide we know that pneumonia is one of the single largest causes of death in children. We know the best way of preventing those diseases worldwide is by doing vaccination. And within the United States when we started giving the pneumococcal vaccine, it started back in 2000, and in 2012 Prevnar 13 is what we give routinely, we have seen an 88% decrease of pneumococcal infections just because of that vaccination," said Dana Deshon, APN, OSF HealthCare.

The symptoms of pneumonia may look like other illnesses that affect children: coughing, chills, fever, vomiting or diarrhea, headaches, and fast or hard breathing. That's why it's important to see a medical provider before symptoms escalate.

November 12 marked the 10th anniversary of World Pneumonia Day, which has a goal to extend the reach of quality health care and immunizations where it is needed most to prevent the disease. Vaccinating children against pneumonia has a trickle-down effect for adults as well. About 18,000 adults die each year in the United States from pneumonia, but through vaccinations there has been a decrease in the number of cases for both children and adults.

"We give it at the 2, 4, and 6 and then usually around 12 or 15 months. Routinely since we give it to those kids they actually then are protecting all of the older population as well. We say it's protecting against pneumonia but meningitis, blood infections and actually kids who are prone to ear infections we have seen that there has been a decreased burden of that because of this vaccination."

The United Nations Foundation [Shot @ Life](#) program is among those working to eradicate disease in children through its Race to Erase initiative, targeting polio, rotavirus, measles and pneumonia through advocacy for vaccinations.

Learn more about symptoms and treatments for pneumonia [here](#).