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PRESS RELEASE

MOHW Introduces the Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine

Belmopan, December 13, 2023.

The Ministry of Health & Wellness (MOHW) has introduced the paediatric pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV) into the national vaccination schedule, targeting children below five years of age.

Worldwide, 164 countries out of 194 World Health Organization member states (84.5%) have introduced PCV into their National Immunization Programs, including Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Curaçao, The Bahamas, Aruba, Anguilla, Jamaica, Montserrat, Bermuda, Turks and Caicos, Brazil, Ecuador and Colombia.

In Belize, from 2018 to 2022, almost 6,000 cases of pneumonia were diagnosed. The most affected age groups are children below five years and the elderly 60+ years.

The PCV vaccine protects against infection by the pneumococcus bacteria, one of the most common causes of pneumonia in children. It also protects against other infections caused by the pneumococcus, such as meningitis and bacteraemia. The Paediatric PCV primary vaccination schedule is three doses administered at two, four and six months. For children 12 months to 59 months old, two doses are recommended. The interval between doses is two months.

The PCV vaccine will be available at health facilities in urban and rural communities during mobile clinics and other outreach vaccination sessions.

The MOHW reminds the public of the interventions to prevent, protect and treat children from pneumonia. These include uptake of routine immunizations (pertussis, measles, Hib and PCV), exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life, proper sanitation, and frequent hand washing with soap.

For further information on the vaccine, kindly contact the Maternal and Child Health Unit in the Ministry of Health & Wellness at 828-4482 or visit the district's public health nurses.

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For more information, please contact:

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