HealthyWomen joins other health leaders in calling for the CDC’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) to make recommendations for the next class of pneumococcal vaccines as soon as possible. Following a year and a half of intense focus on lung health due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it’s critical that new pneumonia vaccines, once approved, are made available to the public as quickly as possible. Pneumococcal disease remains a serious risk, especially among older Americans and at-risk populations, and prevention should be a priority.

So far this year, new pneumonia vaccines that cover more pneumococcal variants have been approved by the FDA. Those vaccines include Pfizer’s PCV20 and Merck’s V114 (PCV15). While this is exciting news, FDA approval is not all that’s needed for a vaccine to become widely available. ACIP recommendations play a critical role in the availability and insurance coverage of all vaccinations, which is why it is necessary for ACIP to determine recommendations as soon as possible.

“We’re grateful for the important work that ACIP does to provide recommendations on vaccinations, particularly during this difficult time of COVID-19,” said Martha Nolan, senior policy advisor at HealthyWomen. “Recognizing that time is of the essence as we quickly approach the start of flu and pneumonia season in the fall, we ask ACIP to take urgent action so that new, more effective pneumococcal vaccines can start getting in the arms of vulnerable Americans.”

Pneumococcal vaccines are critically important for adults over 50, particularly those 65 and older, and especially women — because even though more men get pneumonia, more women die from it. While ACIP would normally review new vaccines in its October meeting, we ask that ACIP make earlier recommendations at their next monthly meeting so that at-risk populations, particularly older Americans and people who have impaired lung capacity due to COVID-19, can access newly FDA-approved pneumococcal vaccines as soon as possible.