

Tetanus and Diphtheria (Td) Vaccine

What is diphtheria?

Diphtheria is a serious disease of the nose, throat and skin. It is passed to others through coughing and sneezing. It causes sore throat, fever and chills. It can lead to breathing problems, heart failure and nerve damage. Treatment for diphtheria includes an antitoxin, followed by antibiotics. However, it is becoming more difficult to treat the diphtheria bacteria due to antibiotic resistance. Diphtheria kills 1 out of every 10 people who get the disease.

What is tetanus?

Tetanus or lockjaw is a serious disease that can happen if dirt with the tetanus germ gets into a cut in the skin. Tetanus germs are found everywhere, usually in soil, dust, and manure. It does not spread from person to person. Tetanus causes cramping of the muscles in the neck, arms, leg and stomach, and painful convulsions which can be severe enough to break bones. Even with early treatment, tetanus kills 10–20% of those who get it.

Who should get the vaccine?

Most people get vaccinated against tetanus and diphtheria in early childhood. A booster is given between 14–16 years of age. Adults can receive Td vaccine every ten years.

Td vaccine

When Td vaccine is given in the recommended number of shots, it protects virtually 100 per cent of people against tetanus and over 95 per cent of people against diphtheria. Vaccination also makes these diseases milder for those who may catch them.

Accessible formats of this document are available upon request.

Region of Waterloo Public Health
Infectious Diseases, Dental and Sexual Health

Who should not get the Td vaccine?

- Anyone with a high fever or serious infection worse than a cold
- Anyone with a serious allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to this vaccine
- A severe allergic reaction to any component of the vaccine including phenoxyethanol, aluminum or formaldehyde

What are the side effects?

Side effects of the Td vaccine are mild and last for only few days after getting the needle. Mild pain, swelling and redness are common at the spot where the needle was given. A few people may get a mild fever, lose their appetite or feel tired for a day or two after the needle.

When should I seek medical attention?

If you develop hives, swelling of the face or mouth, trouble breathing, serious drowsiness or other serious problems seek medical attention immediately.

Your record of protection

After any immunization, ensure your personal immunization record or “yellow card” is updated. Keep it in a safe place.

Questions?

Talk to your health care provider or contact Public Health at 519-575-4400.

