

Tetanus and Diphtheria Vaccine

Vaccines have saved more lives compared to any other medical intervention. Vaccines help the immune system recognize and fight bacteria and viruses that cause serious diseases.

Tetanus and diphtheria are vaccine preventable diseases.

Tetanus ('lockjaw') is caused by bacteria found in the soil worldwide.

- The bacteria make a strong toxin days after entering the body through a cut or injury to the skin.
- The toxin causes painful tightening of muscles in the body. In severe cases, breathing muscles are affected.
- Without treatment, up to 8 in 10 people could die.
- Tetanus cannot be spread from person to person.

Diphtheria is a serious disease that occurs in many countries worldwide.

- The bacteria spread through the air by sneezing or coughing, and skin-to-skin contact.
- Symptoms include a mild fever, sore throat, difficulty swallowing, tiredness and loss of appetite.
- A thick coating covers the back of the throat within 2 to 3 days of illness, blocking the airway.
- Within a few days, the bacteria produce a strong toxin that causes heart failure and paralysis.
- Without treatment, 1 in 10 people could die.

How can these diseases be prevented?

- Be immunized. When you and your child are immunized, you help protect others as well.
- Practice good hygiene (e.g. handwashing).
- Seek medical attention for severe cuts and deep wounds to the skin.
- Cover your mouth when coughing and your nose and mouth when sneezing to prevent direct contact with diphtheria droplets from the nose or throat.

Who can get this vaccine for free?

- Those 7 years and older who have a contraindication to the pertussis vaccine component in the combined tetanus-diphtheria-pertussis (Tdap) vaccine.
- This vaccine is **only** available from public health.

Who should not get this vaccine?

- Persons who have a serious acute illness, with or without a fever, should delay immunizations.
- People who had a serious or life-threatening reaction to a previous dose of a tetanus or diphtheria containing vaccine, or any components of the vaccine.
- Those younger than 7 years old.
- People who received a tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis booster within the last 5 years.
- People who developed Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) within 6 weeks of getting tetanus vaccine should not get the vaccine. GBS is a rare condition that can result in weakness and paralysis of the body's muscles.
- Individuals who have experienced transient thrombocytopenia or other neurological complications following an earlier immunization against diphtheria and/or tetanus.
- Infants and children under seven need different vaccines to protect them against tetanus and diphtheria.

What are common reactions to this vaccine?

- **Vaccines are very safe and effective. It is much safer to get the vaccine than to get these serious diseases.**
- Pain, redness and swelling where the needle was given.
- Some individuals may experience fatigue, headache, fever, dizziness, or sore or swollen joints.

- These reactions are mild and generally last 1 to 2 days.
- Only treat a fever (at least 6 to 8 hours after immunization) if you / your child are uncomfortable and not sleeping.

It is important to stay in the clinic for 15 minutes after getting any vaccine because there is an extremely rare possibility of a life-threatening allergic reaction called anaphylaxis. This may include hives, difficulty breathing, or swelling of the throat, tongue or lips. This reaction can be treated and occurs in less than one in one million people who get the vaccine. **If this happens after you leave the clinic, get medical attention or call 911 right away.**

Who should you report reactions to?

- Report any adverse or unexpected reactions to your local public health nurse, your doctor, nurse practitioner or 811 as soon as possible.

Talk to a public health nurse:

- If you have questions or concerns about your or your child's reaction to an immunization.
- If you or your child had to go to a doctor, a hospital or to a health centre with a symptom that might be related to immunization.

For more information, contact your local public health office, your physician, nurse practitioner, HealthLine online or by calling 811.

What does this vaccine contain?

Td Adsorbed™ contains tetanus toxoid, diphtheria toxoid, aluminum phosphate, sodium chloride and trace amounts of formaldehyde. Thimerosal-free. Latex-free.

Mature Minor Consent

It is recommended that parents/guardians discuss consent for immunization with their children. Efforts are first made to get parental/guardian consent for immunizations. However, children at least 13 years of age up to and including 17 years of age, who are able to understand the benefits and possible reactions for each vaccine and the risks of not getting immunized, can legally consent to or refuse immunizations in Saskatchewan by providing mature minor informed consent to a healthcare provider.

Provincial immunization fact sheets are available at www.saskatchewan.ca/immunize.

References: [Canadian Immunization Guide](#). Td Adsorbed™ product monograph (2022).

Use **Acetaminophen** (Tylenol®, Tempra®) or **Ibuprofen** (Advil®, Motrin®) to treat fevers and pain in children and adults. **Never give ASA** (Aspirin®) to anyone younger than 18 years old because of the serious risk of Reye's syndrome.