

Tetanus and Diphtheria Vaccine

Vaccines have saved more lives in Canada in the last 60 years than any other medical intervention. Vaccines help your immune system to recognize and fight bacteria and viruses that cause 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 within 3-21 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 who get tetanus could die. It cannot be spread from person to person.

Diphtheria is rare in Canada; however this serious disease occurs in many countries worldwide. The bacteria are spread through the air by sneezing or coughing, and direct skin-to-skin contact. Symptoms include a mild fever, sore throat, difficulty swallowing, tiredness and loss of appetite. A grayish white membrane appears in the throat within 2 to 3 days of illness, which causes severe breathing problems like airway obstruction and suffocation. Within 2 to 5 days, the bacteria produce a strong toxin that can cause 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).

Who can get this vaccine for free?

- The vaccine is given to persons 7 years of age and older.
- Adults should get this vaccine every 10 years if they received a series earlier in life.
- People with serious cuts or deep wounds whose last tetanus vaccine was given more than five years ago.
- Adults who have not been immunized or do not have a record of prior immunization.
- NOTE: For young children, tetanus and diphtheria vaccines are combined with other vaccines, such as pertussis (whooping cough), polio and *Haemophilus influenzae* type b. These are given as a series of injections.

Who should not get this vaccine?

- Persons who have a serious illness, with or without a fever, should delay immunizations.
- People who had a life-threatening reaction to a previous dose of a tetanus or diphtheria containing vaccine, or any components of the vaccine.
- 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.

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.**
- Soreness, redness and swelling at the injection site.
- Some individuals may experience fatigue, headache, mild fever or dizziness.
- These reactions are mild and generally last 1 to 2 days.
- Only treat a fever (at least 6 to 8 hours after immunization) **if your child is uncomfortable, refusing fluids and not sleeping.**

Acetaminophen (Tylenol, Tempra) may be given for fever or soreness. ASA (Aspirin) must NOT be given to anyone younger than 18 years old because of the risk of Reye syndrome.

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. **If this happens after you leave the clinic, call 911 or the local emergency number.** This reaction can be treated, and occurs in less than one in one million people who get the vaccine.

Who should you report reactions to?

- Report any adverse or unexpected reactions to your local public health nurse, your doctor, or nurse practitioner 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: Td Adsorbed™ product monograph (2012).