

Tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis (Tdap) Vaccine

Public Health - Fact Sheet

Immunization is one of the most important accomplishments in public health. Immunizations help in eliminating and controlling the spread of infections and diseases. Vaccines help your immune system to recognize and fight bacteria and viruses that cause disease.

What are tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis?

These bacterial infections can cause serious complications including death.

Tetanus (lockjaw): Can cause painful tightening of muscles (spasms). This affects muscles all over the body, including muscles in the head and neck. It may cause problems with chewing, swallowing and breathing. Tetanus infections can often be deadly if it affects the breathing muscles. Tetanus does not spread from person to person. Tetanus spores live in dirt, dust and manure. The spores can get into the body through an open cut or burn on the skin. Symptoms may begin to appear seven to 10 days after infection.

Diphtheria: Can cause a thick covering (membrane) to form in the back of the nose and throat. This can lead to breathing problems, paralysis, heart failure and even death. Diphtheria can be spread by coughing, sneezing or sharing of food or drinks. Diphtheria sometimes causes skin sores. Contact with these sores can also spread infection. Symptoms may begin to appear two to five days after infection.

Pertussis (whooping cough): Is known for its long coughing spells that can make it hard for infants and children to eat, drink or even breathe. It also can result in pneumonia, brain damage, seizures and death. Pertussis can spread easily by coughing or sneezing or face-to-face-contact. Symptoms may begin to appear seven to 10 days after infection.

What is the Tdap Vaccine?

The Tdap vaccine is approved by Health Canada. Most children receive a series of vaccines against tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis as part of the recommended routine immunization schedules. This primary series provides strong protection against these diseases as they grow up. The Tdap vaccine boosts their protection against these diseases when they are older. It does not contain any live bacteria so it cannot cause disease.

Who should get the Tdap vaccine?

All adolescents should get one booster dose of Tdap vaccine at 13 to 15 years of age. Manitoba's school immunization program offers the Tdap vaccine in grade 8 or 9. If your child missed their dose, they can still get a dose from other immunization providers.

Adults should get one dose of Tdap vaccine every 10 years to boost protection against tetanus.

Pregnant individuals should get the Tdap vaccine in every pregnancy. This dose protects their baby from pertussis once they are born. The best timing to get the vaccine is if you are 27 to 32 weeks pregnant, but you can get the vaccine at any time during pregnancy.

Those who are seven years of age and older who did not receive their primary immunizations against tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis should talk to their immunization provider to determine which vaccines and the number of doses they need to be protected against these diseases.

Who should NOT get the Tdap vaccine?

Talk to your health-care provider if you or your child(ren):

- have had a severe allergic reaction after receiving a previous dose of a Tdap vaccine; or
- is/are allergic to any contents of the vaccine; or
- have had Guillian-Barré syndrome (GBS) within six weeks of receiving a previous tetanus-containing vaccine.

Speak to your health-care provider if your child(ren) are under the age of seven years and has/have not completed a primary series against tetanus, diphtheria or pertussis. They may need a different vaccine to complete the series.

Anyone with high fever should postpone immunization until recovered. You can still get the vaccine if the illness is mild, like a cold.

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What are the possible side-effects of the Tdap vaccine?

Health Canada approves vaccines based on a review of quality and safety. It is much safer to get the vaccine than to get tetanus, diphtheria or pertussis. Common reactions to the vaccine include soreness, redness or swelling where the vaccine was given. Some children may have fever, drowsiness, fussiness, loss of appetite or an upset stomach. These are mild reactions and usually only last one to two days. Acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol) can be given for fever or soreness.

Acetylsalicylic acid-ASA (e.g., Aspirin) should NEVER be given to children because it can cause a severe liver and brain disease called Reye's Syndrome.

A severe allergic reaction is a serious but very rare side effect of getting the vaccine. Symptoms could include hives, difficulty breathing or swelling of the throat and face. It is important to stay in the clinic for 15 minutes after getting any vaccine so you or your child(ren) can be monitored. If symptoms occur after leaving the clinic, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department for immediate attention.

Report any serious or unexpected side effects to a health-care provider.

Your record of protection

All immunizations are recorded in a person's immunization record in Manitoba's Immunization Registry.

This registry enables:

- your health-care provider to find out which immunizations you or your child(ren) have received
- the production of immunization records or notification to you about overdue vaccines
- public health officials to monitor how well vaccines work in preventing disease

For information on how to obtain a copy of your immunization record, visit: www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/div/records.html.

The Personal Health Information Act protects your information and/or that of your child(ren). You can have your personal health information and/or that of your child(ren) hidden from view from health-care providers. For more information: www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/surveillance/phims.html

For the most current version of this or other vaccine factsheets and resources, visit: www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/div/vaccines.html

For more information on tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis or the Tdap vaccine, you can:

- talk to your health-care provider
- call Health Links–Info Santé in Winnipeg at 204-788-8200; toll-free elsewhere in Manitoba 1-888-315-9257
- visit Manitoba's Immunization Program website at: www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/div/index.html