

Tetanus and Diphtheria (Td) Vaccine

Communicable Disease Control – Factsheet

Vaccination has saved more lives in Canada in the last 50 years than any other medical intervention. Vaccines help your immune system to recognize and fight bacteria and viruses that cause diseases.

What is the Td Vaccine?

The Td vaccine protects against two different diseases. Both of these diseases can cause serious infection and can sometimes be fatal.

1. Tetanus, often called “lockjaw”, is caused by a toxin released by bacteria. Tetanus infections cause painful tightening of muscles (spasms). Tetanus infections can be very serious and often deadly if the breathing muscles are affected.
2. Diphtheria is caused by bacteria that can make a thick covering (membrane) in the back of the nose and throat, which can lead to breathing problems. These bacteria can also produce a harmful toxin (poison) that can cause paralysis and heart failure.

The Td vaccine is approved by Health Canada and is provided free by Manitoba Health. The vaccine does not contain any live bacteria so it cannot cause either of these diseases.

How are these diseases spread?

Tetanus does not spread from person to person. Tetanus spores live in dirt, dust and manure. When there is a cut or burn on the skin, spores can get into the body and cause infection.

Diphtheria can be spread from person to person by coughing, sneezing, or sharing food or drinks. Diphtheria sometimes causes skin sores, and contact with these sores can also spread infection.

Why should I get the Td vaccine?

Vaccination is the best way to protect yourself and your child against tetanus and diphtheria.

When you are immunized against diphtheria you also help protect others, because someone who is vaccinated is less likely to spread infection.

Who should get the Td vaccine?

- All adults should get one shot of Td vaccine every 10 years.
- A booster dose of Td vaccine may be needed if an adult or child seven years of age or older has a cut or burn.
- If you have been ill with tetanus or diphtheria in the past, you are still at risk for infection and should get the Td shot.

Who should NOT get the Td vaccine?

Speak with a public health nurse or doctor if you have had a serious reaction to a previous dose of any vaccine including Guillain Barré Syndrome (GBS), or if you have any severe allergies.

You should not get vaccinated if you have a high fever. But you can still get the Td shot if you have a mild illness, like a cold.

Pregnant women in their first trimester should not get vaccinated with Td unless they suffer a severe cut or burn. Your doctor can tell you if a wound is considered severe.

Babies and children under seven need different vaccines to protect them against tetanus and diphtheria. For more information speak to your public health nurse or doctor.

Possible side-effects of the Td vaccine.

Vaccines are known to be very safe. It is much safer for you to get the Td vaccine than to get tetanus or diphtheria infections.

Common reactions to the vaccine include soreness, redness and swelling where the vaccine was given. Some people may have fever, chills, and sore or swollen joints. These are mild reactions and

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usually only last two to three days. Acetaminophen (Tylenol® or Tempra®) can be given for fever or soreness.

ASA (Aspirin®) should NEVER be given to children because it can cause a severe liver and brain disease called Reye's Syndrome.

It is important to stay in the clinic for 15 minutes after getting any vaccine because there is a rare possibility of a severe allergic reaction. This can include hives, difficulty breathing, or swelling of the throat, tongue or lips. If this happens after you leave the clinic, **call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department for immediate treatment.**

Other rare side-effects include:

- Severe swelling where the vaccine was given. This is more likely to happen if doses of Td vaccine are given too often.

- Some vaccines that protect against tetanus have been associated with Guillain Barré Syndrome (GBS), which is a form of paralysis that is usually temporary. People who are not vaccinated can also get GBS.

Report any serious or unexpected side effects to a public health nurse or doctor.

For more information on the Td vaccine:

Talk to your doctor or public health nurse.

Call Health Links-Info Santé in Winnipeg at 788-8200; toll-free elsewhere in Manitoba 1-888-315-9257.

Or visit:

Manitoba Public Health
www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/atoz.html

Public Health Agency of Canada
origin.phac-aspc.gc.ca/im/vpd-mev/