TETANUS AND THE VACCINE TO PREVENT IT

The best way to protect against tetanus is by getting the diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis vaccine (called DTaP). Doctors recommend that all children get the vaccine.

Why should my child get the DTaP vaccine?

The DTaP vaccine:

- Protects your child from tetanus, a potentially serious disease, as well as diphtheria and whooping cough (pertussis).
- Protects your child from painful muscle stiffness from tetanus.
- Keeps your child from missing school or childcare (and keeps you from missing work to care for your sick child).

Is the DTaP vaccine safe?

Yes. The DTaP vaccine is very safe, and it is effective at preventing tetanus. Vaccines, like any medicine, can have side effects. Most children who get the vaccine have no side effects.

What are the side effects?

Most children don't have any side effects from the vaccine. The side effects that do occur are usually mild and may include:

- Redness, swelling, or pain where the vaccine was given
- Fever
- Vomiting

These types of side effects happen in about 1 out of every 4 children who get the vaccine.

More serious side effects are very rare but can include:

- A fever over 105 degrees
- Nonstop crying for 3 hours or more
- Seizures (jerking, twitching of the muscles, or staring)

What is tetanus?

Tetanus is a serious disease caused by a toxin (poison) made by bacteria. It causes painful muscle stiffness and can be deadly.

What are the symptoms of tetanus?

Tetanus in children starts with headache, jaw cramping, and muscle spasms (sudden, involuntary muscle tightening).

It also causes the following:

- Painful muscle stiffness all over the body
- Trouble swallowing
- Seizures
- Fever and sweating
- High blood pressure and fast heart rate

Tetanus is often called "lockjaw" because the jaw muscles tighten, making it hard to open the mouth.

Is it serious?

Tetanus is very dangerous. It can cause breathing problems, muscle spasms, and paralysis (unable to move parts of the body). Muscle spasms can be strong enough to break a child's spine or other bones.

It can take months to recover fully from tetanus. A child might need weeks of hospital care. As many as 1 out of 5 people who get tetanus dies.

How could my child get tetanus?

The bacteria that cause tetanus are found in soil, dust, and manure. They get into the body through a puncture, cut, or sore on the skin. A person can also be infected after a burn or an animal bite.

Tetanus does not spread from one person to another.

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Ask your provider or visit www.cdc.gov/vaccines/parents for more information.

TETANUS AND THE VACCINE TO PREVENT IT (Continued)

Booster vaccines are needed to keep up protection from tetanus.
The DTaP vaccine does not offer lifetime protection. People need booster vaccines to keep up protection from diphtheria.

Children should get a booster vaccine called Tdap (which helps to protect against tetanus, diphtheria, and whooping cough) at 11 or 12 years old. Everyone, regardless of age, who does not get the Tdap vaccine as an adolescent should get one dose as a replacement for their 10-year Td booster vaccine (for tetanus and diphtheria).

Adults need the Td booster vaccine every 10 years.

Recommendations

Doctors recommend that your child get five doses of the DTaP vaccine for best protection. Your child will need one dose at each of the following ages:

- 2 months
- 4 months
- 6 months
- 15 through 18 months
- 4 through 6 years

Where can I learn more about the Hib vaccine and my child?
To learn more about the DTaP vaccine, talk to your child's healthcare provider or visit **www.cdc.gov/vaccines/parents**.

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