

# Tetanus Diphtheria (Td) Vaccine Fact Sheet

The tetanus and diphtheria vaccine (Td) helps to protect almost everyone against both diseases, when given in the recommended schedule.

## What are tetanus and diphtheria?

- **Tetanus, or lockjaw**, is a serious bacterial infection you can get if dirt containing the tetanus germ gets into a cut in the skin. Tetanus germs are usually found in soil, dust and manure. It does not spread from person to person. Tetanus usually causes cramping of the muscles and severe convulsions, and it can be fatal.
- **Diphtheria** is a serious bacterial infection of the nose, throat and skin, and it is spread through coughing, sneezing and skin-to-skin contact. Diphtheria causes sore throat, fever and chills and can result in breathing problems, heart failure and paralysis and death.

## Who should get the publicly funded (free) Td vaccine in Ontario?

- While Td vaccine *may* be given to those over 7 years of age, there are other combination vaccines that protect against other diseases, as well. These are preferred for children, adolescents and adults who have not been previously immunized.
- Td vaccine is recommended as a booster for adults every 10 years:
  - All adolescents and adults receive a one-time dose of Tdap vaccine—which combines tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis—to provide increased protection against pertussis.
  - Adolescents in Ontario currently receive their Tdap booster between 14-16 years of age.

## Who should not get the Td vaccine?

- Anyone who has had a serious allergic reaction to any previous dose of vaccine containing tetanus or diphtheria or to any component of the vaccine:
  - **Td Adsorbed** – tetanus toxoid, diphtheria toxoid, aluminum phosphate, sodium chloride, 2- phenoxyethanol and residual formaldehyde (Does **not** contain latex)
- Anyone under 7 years of age.
- Anyone with a high fever or moderate to severe illness should wait until they feel well.
- Anyone who has received a booster dose of a tetanus-containing vaccine in the past 5 years.
- Anyone who has a:
  - progressive or unstable neurological disorder (e.g. uncontrolled epilepsy)
  - history of Guillain-Barre syndrome (GBS) within 6 weeks of a tetanus vaccine

IMM-53 2022-09-08

### **What are the common side effects of this vaccine?**

- Some people may feel sore and swollen for a few days where the needle was given.
- Some people may have general muscle aches, fever and feel tired for a day or two.
- Tylenol® or ibuprofen may be taken afterwards, as directed, to reduce discomfort or fever.
- **Children under 19 years of age must not be given ASA, Aspirin® or salicylates.**

### **What else do I need to know?**

- If you cut yourself on something unclean, you should have a tetanus diphtheria booster if it has been more than 5 yrs since your last shot. You should have the booster as soon as possible and within 48 hrs of the injury if possible.
- Pregnant individuals should discuss the Tdap vaccine (Td combined with pertussis vaccine) with their health care providers and receive it once during every pregnancy.
- To reduce the spread of germs, sneeze or cough into a tissue or into your elbow or upper sleeve and wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 15 seconds.

### **When should I seek medical help after immunization?**

- If you or your child experiences any unusual side effects, please seek medical attention and notify us.
- Go to Emergency at a hospital right away or call 911 if you have any of the following symptoms after immunization:
  - swelling of the face and neck
  - problems breathing
  - hives and itchy, reddened skin

### **Your Record of Protection**

After you receive any immunization, make sure your health care provider updates your personal immunization record. Keep it in a safe place. Please inform us of any immunizations not received here.

**Other questions?** Talk to your health care provider or call our Immunization Program at 613-966-5500 Toll Free 1-800-267-2803 TTY: Dial 711 Website: [www.hpepublichealth.ca](http://www.hpepublichealth.ca)

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