



## Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis Vaccine

Vaccines are the best way to protect people against many diseases and their complications. When you get vaccinated, you help protect others as well.

The tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis (Tdap) vaccine is offered to all students in grade 9. This dose boosts immunity to tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis in children vaccinated earlier.

The Tdap vaccine can also be given to children 7 years of age and older who have not been fully immunized, and to adults or immigrants who have not been immunized.

### What is the Tdap vaccine?

The Tdap vaccine protects against 3 diseases:

- Tetanus
- Diphtheria
- Pertussis

### What is tetanus?

**Tetanus**, also called “lockjaw”, is caused by a germ or bacteria mostly found in the soil. When the bacteria enter the skin through a cut or scrape, they produce a poison that can cause painful tightening of muscles all over the body. It is very serious if the breathing muscles are affected. Up to 2 in 10 people who get tetanus will die.

### What is diphtheria?

**Diphtheria** is a serious infection of the nose and throat. About 1 in 10 people who get diphtheria will die. The germ or bacteria are spread through the air by persons sneezing or coughing and by direct skin-to-skin contact. The disease can result in very severe breathing problems. It can also cause heart failure and paralysis.

### What is pertussis?

**Pertussis**, or “whooping cough”, is a serious infection of the lungs and throat. Each year in Canada, 1 to 3 deaths occur due to pertussis, primarily in babies. The germ or bacteria are easily spread through coughing, sneezing, or close face-to-face contact.

Pertussis can cause severe coughing that often ends with a whooping sound before the next breath. This cough can last several months and occurs more often at night. Pertussis can also cause pneumonia, convulsions, brain damage or death. These severe complications are seen most often in babies; however, older children and adults with pertussis often spread it to babies who are too young to be fully protected by the vaccine.

### Possible reactions after the Tdap vaccine

Common reactions may include soreness, redness and swelling in the arm where the shot was given. Headache and mild fever may also occur.

For any vaccine, there is an extremely rare possibility of a life-threatening reaction called anaphylaxis. This may include hives, difficulty breathing, or swelling of the throat, tongue, lips or eyes. Call 9-1-1 or your local emergency number if these reactions occur. These reactions can be treated and occur in less than one in a million people who get the vaccine. It is important to stay in the clinic setting for 15 minutes after getting any vaccine, as this is the time period when anaphylaxis usually occurs.

**Report all serious or unexpected reactions to your public health nurse or doctor.**

**Acetaminophen or Tylenol®** can be given for fever or soreness. ASA or Aspirin® should NOT be given to anyone under 20 years of age due to the risk of Reye Syndrome.

### Who should not get the Tdap vaccine?

The vaccine is not recommended for those who:

- Had a life-threatening allergic reaction to a previous dose of tetanus, diphtheria, or pertussis vaccines, or to any component of these vaccines.
- Had Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) within 8 weeks of getting the tetanus vaccine. GBS is a rare condition that results in weakness and paralysis of the body's muscles. It usually occurs after infections, but it can occur rarely after some vaccines.

If you have concerns that you should not receive this vaccine, speak with your health care provider.

### Mature Minor Consent

It is recommended that parents or guardians and their children discuss consent for immunization. Efforts are first made to seek parental/guardian or representative consent prior to immunization. However, children under the age of 19, who are able to understand the benefits and possible reactions for each vaccine and the risk of not getting immunized, can legally consent to or refuse immunizations.

### For more information

Immunize BC: [www.immunizebc.ca](http://www.immunizebc.ca)

For more HealthLink BC File topics, visit [www.HealthLinkBC.ca/healthfiles/index.stm](http://www.HealthLinkBC.ca/healthfiles/index.stm) or your local public health unit.

Click on [www.HealthLinkBC.ca](http://www.HealthLinkBC.ca) or call **8-1-1** for non-emergency health information and services in B.C.

For deaf and hearing-impaired assistance, call 7-1-1 in B.C.

Translation services are available in more than 130 languages on request.



ImmunizeBC



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