

# Tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis (Tdap) vaccine

Immunization has saved more lives in Canada in the last 50 years than any other health measure.

## What is the Tdap vaccine?

The Tdap vaccine protects against:

- Tetanus
- Diphtheria
- Pertussis (whooping cough)

The vaccine is approved by Health Canada and is free as part of your child's routine immunizations. Call your health care provider to make an appointment.

## Who should get the Tdap vaccine?

The tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis (Tdap) vaccine is offered to all students in grade 9. This is a booster dose for children immunized against these diseases at a younger age. The booster dose strengthens or boosts the immune system to give better protection against these diseases. Children who received a booster dose of Tdap vaccine on or after their 10<sup>th</sup> birthday do not need a dose in grade 9.

The Tdap vaccine is recommended and provided free to pregnant people in every pregnancy. The vaccine should be given at 27-32 weeks of pregnancy regardless of previous Tdap immunization history but may be given as early as 13 weeks and up until delivery.

Children 7 years of age and older and adults who have not been fully immunized or whose immunization history is unknown can also get the vaccine.

A booster dose of the Tdap vaccine is recommended, but not provided free, for adults who were immunized in childhood. Adults who want to get the vaccine can buy it at most pharmacies and travel clinics.

It is important to keep a record of all immunizations received.

## What are the benefits of the Tdap vaccine?

The Tdap vaccine is the best way to protect against tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis which are serious and sometimes fatal diseases. When you get immunized, you help protect others as well.

## What are the possible reactions after the Tdap vaccine?

Vaccines are very safe. It is much safer to get the vaccine than to get one of the diseases.

Common reactions to the vaccine may include soreness, redness and swelling in the arm where the vaccine was given. Headache, fatigue, muscle or joint soreness, chills, nausea, diarrhea and mild fever may also occur.

Acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (e.g. Advil®) can be given for fever or soreness. ASA (e.g. Aspirin®) should not be given to anyone under 18 years of age due to the risk of Reye Syndrome.

For more information on Reye Syndrome, see [HealthLinkBC File #84 Reye Syndrome](#).

It is important to stay in the clinic for 15 minutes after getting any vaccine because there is an extremely rare possibility, less than 1 in a million, of a life-threatening allergic reaction called anaphylaxis. This may include hives, difficulty breathing or swelling of the throat, tongue or lips. If this reaction occurs, your health care provider is prepared to treat it. Emergency treatment consists of the administration of epinephrine (adrenaline) and transfer by ambulance to the nearest emergency department. If symptoms develop after you leave the clinic, call **9-1-1** or the local emergency number.

It is important to always report all serious or unexpected reactions to your health care provider.

### Who should not get the Tdap vaccine?

Speak with your health care provider if you or your child has had a life-threatening allergic reaction to a previous dose of a tetanus, diphtheria, or pertussis vaccine, or to any part of the vaccine.

People who developed Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) within 8 weeks of getting a tetanus vaccine, without another cause being identified, should not get the Tdap vaccine.

Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) is a rare condition that results in weakness and paralysis of the body's muscles. It most commonly occurs after infections, but in rare cases can also occur after some vaccines.

There is no need to delay getting immunized because of a cold or other mild illness. However, if you have concerns, speak with your health care provider.

### What are tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis?

**Tetanus**, also known as lockjaw, is caused by bacteria mostly found in 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 1 in 5 people who get tetanus may die.

**Diphtheria** is a serious infection of the nose and throat caused by diphtheria bacteria. The bacteria are spread through the air by people sneezing or

coughing, and by direct skin-to-skin contact. The disease can result in very serious breathing problems. It can also cause heart failure and paralysis. About 1 in 10 people who get diphtheria may die.

**Pertussis**, also known as whooping cough, is a serious infection of the airways caused by pertussis bacteria. The bacteria are easily spread by coughing, sneezing or close face-to-face contact. Pertussis can cause pneumonia, seizures, brain damage or death. These complications are seen most often in infants. 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. About 1 in 170 infants who get pertussis may die.

### Mature minor consent

It is recommended that parents or guardians and their children discuss consent for immunization. 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 on mature minor consent see [HealthLinkBC File #119 The Infants Act, Mature Minor Consent and Immunization](#).



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