



Tetanus, Diphtheria (Td) Vaccine

Td is a two-in-one vaccine protecting people against tetanus and diphtheria. It is approved for people 7 years and older. Vaccination against tetanus, diphtheria and polio is required by law for all children attending school in Ontario (unless exempted).

What is tetanus?

Tetanus or lockjaw is a serious disease that can happen if dirt with tetanus germs gets into a cut in the skin. Tetanus germs are found everywhere, usually in soil, dust and manure. Tetanus does not spread from person to person. It causes cramping of the muscles in the neck, arms, legs and stomach, and painful convulsions which can be severe enough to break bones. Tetanus kills 2 out of every 10 people who get it, even with early treatment.

What is diphtheria?

Diphtheria is a serious disease of the nose, throat and skin. It causes sore throat, fever and chills. It can be complicated by breathing problems, heart failure and nerve damage. Diphtheria kills about 1 out of every 10 people who get the disease. It is most often passed to others through coughing and sneezing.

Who should get Td vaccine?

Td vaccine is given to adults as a booster shot. One dose of a combination vaccine containing tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis (Tdap) is also offered to all adults between 19 and 64 years, who were not immunized against pertussis in adolescence. One dose of Tdap in adults provides lifelong protection against pertussis. While adults need only one lifetime dose of pertussis, booster doses against tetanus and diphtheria are needed every 10 years for continued protection.

Is Td vaccine safe?

Yes. Side effects of Td vaccine are mild and usually last only a few days after getting the shot. Mild pain, swelling and redness are common at the spot where the shot was given. A few people may get a mild fever, lose their appetite or feel tired for a day or two after the shot. Allergic reactions and other severe reactions after the shot are very rare. **You should always discuss the benefits and risks of any vaccine with your doctor/nurse practitioner or local health unit.**

When should I call my doctor/nurse practitioner?

Call your doctor/nurse practitioner or go to the nearest hospital emergency department if any of the following symptoms develop within 3 days of getting the shot:

- hives
- swelling of the face or mouth
- trouble breathing
- very pale colour and serious drowsiness
- high fever (over 40°C or 104°F)
- convulsions or seizures
- other serious problems

Who should not get the Td vaccine?

These include persons who:

- had a serious allergic reaction to a previous dose of a vaccine containing diphtheria and/or tetanus or to any component in the Td vaccine (formaldehyde, 2-phenoxyethanol, aluminum)
- had a tetanus shot in the last 5 years
- are less than 7 years of age

Please consult with your health care provider if you:

- have a high fever or serious infection worse than a cold
- are pregnant

Who should I talk to if I have any more questions about Td vaccine?

Talk to your doctor/nurse practitioner or call Renfrew County and District Health Unit Health Info Line at 613-735-8666 or 1-800-267-1097 Ext. 666.

Your record of protection

After you get any immunization, make sure your personal immunization record (Yellow Card) is updated. Keep it in a safe place!

Renfrew County and District Health Unit
7 International Drive
Pembroke, Ontario K8A 6W5
613-735-8666 or 1-800-267-1097, Ext. 666.

Adapted from Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Tetanus-diphtheria-pertussis (Tdap) Vaccine Questions and Answers for Parents and Caregivers (July 2011) and Tetanus and Diphtheria (Td) Vaccine Fact Sheet (June 2009)

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