



Tetanus/diphtheria (Td absorbed) Adolescent/Adult Booster

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

What are Tetanus and Diphtheria? Tetanus (lockjaw) and diphtheria are serious diseases. Tetanus bacteria enter the body through a cut or wound. The bacteria may be found everywhere including soil, dust and animal manure. The illness starts with a headache and very stiff jaw muscles followed by a stiff neck, difficulty swallowing, stiff stomach muscles, the inability to control muscles (spasms), sweating, and fever. After the germs enter the body, it usually takes 8 days to become ill although the range may be 3 days to 3 weeks. Diphtheria spreads when the germs pass from the nose, throat or skin of one person to another person. Some people with the germs do not get ill. Some people get a fever and a thick coating in the nose, throat that causes breathing problems. While tetanus is rare in BC because of our successful childhood vaccinations, in 2008 three people died from tetanus.

Even with early treatment, tetanus kills two out of every 10 infected people. Diphtheria may lead to heart failure and nerve damage and kills 10% of those who become sick.

How can I protect others and myself? For adults, the tetanus/ diphtheria (Td) booster is the best way to protect your body against tetanus and diphtheria germs. Adolescents in B.C. usually receive a booster for tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis in Grade 9. If you have never had tetanus and/or diphtheria vaccinations, consult with your doctor about which vaccinations are recommended. Everyone should seek immediate medical treatment after puncture wounds. Always cover your mouth and nose when sneezing or coughing and wash your hands often to prevent spreading germs.

Who should receive the Td booster vaccination? The British Columbia Centre for Disease Control recommends that all adolescents and adults get a tetanus and diphtheria booster every 10 years.

Who should not receive the Td booster vaccination?

- Those who have had tetanus or diphtheria vaccine within the past 10 years.
- Those who had Guillain-Barré syndrome within 8 weeks of a previous tetanus vaccine.
- Those who had a **life threatening allergic reaction** following a vaccination against tetanus or diphtheria or to a vaccine ingredient such as formaldehyde or aluminium phosphate.
- Those who have never been immunized against tetanus and diphtheria

What do I need to know about the Td Adult/Adolescent Booster Vaccination?

- The vaccine contains only toxins that have been made safe. These safe ingredients teach your body to attack the germs. You cannot catch the germs or pass them to anyone else from the vaccination.
- Like other vaccinations, Td vaccine is not 100% effective in protecting susceptible individuals.
- People must be 18 years old to receive this vaccine in the Health & Home Care Society of BC clinic.
- Td vaccine could cause serious problems such as allergic reactions. Allergic reactions are very rare. Mild problems include soreness where the vaccination was given and flu-like symptoms including headache, loss of appetite, body aches, a mild fever, diarrhea, and tiredness. If these problems occur, they usually last for 1 or 2 days. If they last longer or seem serious, call a doctor.
- There are no published data showing that any of the currently approved vaccines are teratogenic or embryotoxic, or have resulted in specific adverse pregnancy outcomes.

What if there is a moderate to severe reaction? An allergic reaction may occur within a few minutes to a few hours of the vaccination (very rare). Signs of an allergic reaction can include difficulty breathing, swelling of the tongue and lips, hoarseness or wheezing, hives, paleness, weakness, a fast heartbeat or dizziness. This is a medical emergency. Call 911.

Please come to the clinic prepared: You will receive the vaccination in the upper arm. Dress appropriately. Complete the Screening Questionnaire. If you have one, bring your record of immunization with you. After having an opportunity to ask questions of the nurse, you will be asked to sign your consent. Be prepared to wait 15 minutes or longer if there is a concern to be observed for allergic reactions.