

Tdap Vaccine: What you need to know

1. Why get vaccinated?

Tetanus, diphtheria and **pertussis** can be very serious diseases, even for adolescents and adults. Tdap vaccine can protect us from these diseases.

TETANUS (Lockjaw) causes painful muscle tightening and stiffness, usually all over the body.

- It can lead to tightening of muscles in the head and neck so you can't open your mouth, swallow, or sometimes even breathe. Tetanus kills about 1 out of 5 people who are infected.

DIPHTHERIA can cause a thick coating to form in the back of the throat.

- It can lead to breathing problems, paralysis, heart failure, and death.

PERTUSSIS (Whooping Cough) causes severe coughing spells, which can cause difficulty breathing, vomiting and disturbed sleep.

- It can also lead to weight loss, incontinence, and rib fractures.
Up to 2 in 100 adolescents and 5 in 100 adults with pertussis are hospitalized or have complications, which could include pneumonia or death.

These diseases are caused by bacteria. Diphtheria and pertussis are spread from person to person through coughing or sneezing. Tetanus enters the body through cuts, scratches, or wounds.

2. Tdap vaccine

Tdap vaccine can protect adolescents and adults from tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis. One dose of Tdap is routinely given at age 11 or 12. People who did *not* get Tdap at that age should get it as soon as possible.

Tdap is especially important for health care professionals and anyone having close contact with a baby younger than 12 months.

Pregnant women should get a dose of Tdap during *every* pregnancy, to protect the newborn from pertussis. Infants are most at risk for severe, life-threatening complications from pertussis.

A similar vaccine, called Td, protects from tetanus and diphtheria, but not pertussis. A Td booster should be given every 10 years. Tdap may be given as one of these boosters if you have not already gotten a dose. Tdap may also be given after a severe cut or burn to prevent tetanus infection.

3. Some people should not get this vaccine

- If you ever had a life-threatening allergic reaction after a dose of any tetanus, diphtheria, or pertussis containing vaccine, OR if you have a severe allergy to any part of this vaccine, you should not get Tdap.
- If you had a coma, or long or multiple seizures within 7 days after a childhood dose of DTP or DTaP, you should not get Tdap, unless a cause other than the vaccine was found. You can still get Td.
- Talk to your doctor if you:
 - have epilepsy or another nervous system problem,
 - had *severe* pain or swelling after any vaccine containing diphtheria, tetanus or pertussis,
 - ever had Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS),
 - aren't feeling well on the day the shot is scheduled.

4. Risks of a vaccine reaction

Brief **fainting spells** can follow a vaccination, leading to injuries from falling. Sitting or lying down for about 15 minutes can help prevent these.

Mild Problems

- Pain where the shot was given
- Redness or swelling where the shot was given
- Mild fever of at least 100.4°F
- Headache
- Tiredness
- Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, stomach ache
- Chills, body aches, sore joints, rash, swollen glands

Moderate Problems

- Pain where the shot was given
- Redness or swelling where the shot was given
- Fever over 102°F
- Headache
- Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, stomach ache
- Swelling of the entire arm where the shot was given.

Severe Problems

- Swelling, severe pain, bleeding and redness in the arm where the shot was given.

A **severe allergic reaction** could occur after any vaccine (estimated less than 1 in a million doses).

5. What if there is a serious reaction?

What should I look for?

- Look for anything that concerns you, such as signs of a severe allergic reaction, very high fever, or behavior changes.

Signs of a severe allergic reaction can include hives, swelling of the face and throat, difficulty breathing, a fast heartbeat, dizziness, and weakness. These would start a few minutes to a few hours after the vaccination.