

Combined Tetanus-Diphtheria-Acellular Pertussis (dTap) Vaccine (ADACEL)

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) recommends the use of acellular pertussis vaccine in adolescents and adults. The reason for this recommendation is that many adolescents and adults have become susceptible to pertussis, giving waning immunity, particularly if immunity was obtained through vaccine. As a result, there has been an increase in the incidence of this disease in adolescents and adults. In particular, children born before 1995 who received their primary immunization with the previous adsorbed pertussis vaccine are at risk for pertussis because that vaccine had poor efficacy. For all these reasons, NACI is recommending a single dose of acellular pertussis vaccine for all adolescents and adults, in the form of the combination Adacel, which also contains tetanus and diphtheria toxoids.

The Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-term Care is providing Adacel free of charge for adolescents. Any adolescent who is due for their 14-16 year old booster should now be immunized with Adacel, rather than TdPolio. This change in programme is consistent with the NACI recommendation that the adolescent dose of polio vaccine is no longer needed, given the fact that most children have had enhanced polio vaccine, and the fact that polio had been virtually eliminated from the western hemisphere. NACI also recommends that all adults who have not previously received a dose of acellular vaccine receive a single dose of Adacel. However, this vaccine is not provided free of charge by the province.

What is Pertussis?

Pertussis is commonly known as whooping cough, and is a serious disease, especially in children. Children who get this disease have spells of violent coughing which can cause them to vomit or stop breathing for a short period of time. The cough can last for weeks and make it hard for a child to eat, drink, or even breathe. Pertussis can cause serious complications. Pneumonia can occur in more than one out of five children with pertussis. It can also cause brain damage and death. These problems happen most often in babies. Pertussis spreads very easily from an infected person to others through coughing or sneezing.

What is Diphtheria?

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

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Kingston
221 Portsmouth Avenue
Kingston, ON K7M 1V5
Tel: 613-549-1232
1-800-267-7875
Fax: 613-549-7896

Cloyne
P.O. Box 59
14209 Highway 41
Cloyne, ON K0H 1K0
Tel: 613-336-8989
Fax: 613-336-0522

Napanee
41 Dundas Street
Napanee, ON
K7R 1Z5
Tel: 613-354-3357
Fax: 354-6267

Sharbot Lake
P.O. Box 149
1130 Elizabeth Street
Sharbot Lake, ON K0H 2P0
Tel: 613-279-2151
Fax: 613-279-3997

What is Tetanus?

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

Who should not get the Adacel Vaccine?

1. Children under the age of seven years should not receive ADACEL. Instead they should be given a tetanus toxoid – containing vaccine such as QUADRACEL or PENTACEL as part of routine childhood immunization.
2. Allergy to any component of ADACEL or anaphylactic or other allergic reaction to a previous dose of Td Adsorbed or another component pertussis combination vaccine are contraindications to vaccination.
3. Immunization may be deferred if your child has a high fever or serious infection worse than a cold.

What local reactions, if any, may be expected?

Pain at the injection site is the most common local reaction. There may be swelling and redness at the site. These local reactions are generally mild and only last a few days. Other systemic adverse events reported were fever, headache, vomiting, diarrhea, generalized body ache, and fatigue.

Who should I talk to if I have any more questions about the Adacel Vaccine?

Talk to your doctor or call KFL&A Public Health for more information.

Your record of protection

After your child receives immunization, make sure the doctor or nurse updates your personal immunization record such as the “Yellow Card.” Keep it in a safe place.