

Tetanus and Diphtheria (Td) Vaccine

Vaccines are the best way to protect against very serious infections. The National Advisory Committee on Immunization strongly recommends routine immunization. Td is a two-in-one needle. It protects people against tetanus and diphtheria. It is used in people 7 years or older.

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 one out of every ten people who get the disease. It is passed to others through coughing and sneezing.

What is tetanus?

Tetanus or lockjaw 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 two out of every ten people who get it.

How well does Td vaccine protect against tetanus and diphtheria?

When Td vaccine is given in the recommended number of shots, it protects over 95 percent of people against tetanus and over 85 percent of people against diphtheria. Vaccination also makes these diseases milder for those who may catch them.

When should Td vaccine be given?

Most people get vaccinated against tetanus and diphtheria in early childhood. Adults should get Td vaccine boosters every ten years for continued protection.

Is the Td vaccine safe?

Yes. Side effects of the Td vaccine are mild and last for only a few days after getting the needle. Mild pain, swelling and redness are common at the spot where the needle was given. A few people may get a mild fever, lose their appetite or feel tired for a day or two after the needle.

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When should I call my doctor?

Call your doctor if any of the following symptoms develop within three days of getting the needle:

- 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, or
- other serious problems.

Who should NOT get the Td vaccine?

The doctor may decide not to give the Td vaccine if the person has:

- a high fever or serious infection worse than a cold,
- a severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to this vaccine, or
- a severe allergic reaction to any component of the vaccine.

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

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

Your record of protection

After you receive any immunization, make sure the doctor updates your personal immunization record such as the “Yellow Card”. Keep it in a safe place.

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