

## **Tetanus Disease**

### **Description**

A disease of the nervous system caused by bacteria

### **Symptoms**

Early symptoms: lockjaw, stiffness in the neck and abdomen, and difficulty swallowing

Later symptoms: severe muscle spasms, generalized tonic seizure-like activity, severe autonomic nervous system disorders

### **Complications**

Death in about 10-20% of cases, higher among older people

### **Transmission**

Enters the body through a break in the skin

### **Vaccine**

Tetanus toxoid (contained in Tdap, DTP, DT, DTaP, and Td vaccines) can prevent this disease.

### **Who Needs It?**

Does my infant need this vaccine?

Yes, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends 5 doses of diphtheria and tetanus toxoids and acellular pertussis (DTaP) vaccine for infants and children. One dose of DTaP vaccine is recommended at each of the following ages: 2 months, 4 months, 6 months, 15-18 months, 4-6 years old. DTaP vaccine may be given at the same time as other vaccines.

As an adult, do I need this vaccine?

Everyone needs protection from tetanus. If you have not had a booster shot in 10 years or more, you should receive a tetanus shot. If you never had the initial childhood tetanus vaccines, you should receive a series of three tetanus shots.

See also: adult immunization schedule