



# FACT SHEET

## TETANUS AND DIPHTHERIA (Td VACCINE)

**Td** is a two-in-one needle that protects people against tetanus and diphtheria. It is used in people seven years of age 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 about one out of every 10 people who get the disease. It is most often 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 10 people who get it.

### When should Td vaccine be given?

Most people get vaccinated against tetanus and diphtheria in early childhood. Around the 15th birthday a booster needle is given to people who were vaccinated against tetanus and diphtheria at an early age. This booster dose may also contain pertussis vaccine. Adults should get Td vaccine boosters every 10 years for continued protection.

### Is 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 getting the needle.

### When should I call my doctor?

Call your doctor if any of the following symptoms develop within three days after 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;
- other serious problems.

### Who should not get the Td vaccine?

Td vaccine will not be given if the person has:

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

### Your record of protection

After you receive any immunization, make sure the doctor updates your personal immunization record such as the "Yellow Card". The local health unit requires that parents provide up to date immunization information for all school children. As an adult it is valuable to know when you were last immunized in case you sustain an injury for which tetanus immunization is recommended. Keep your record in a safe place!

### Who can I call for more information?

Contact the Renfrew County and District Health Unit, Health Info Line at **735-8666** or **1-800-267-1097 Ext 666**.

### Renfrew County and District Health Unit

7 International Drive  
Pembroke, ON, K8A 6W5

613-735-8666 or  
1-800-267-1097, Ext. 666

**Source:** Adapted from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. *Immunization Fact Sheet*