

Tetanus

What is Tetanus?

Tetanus is a serious disease. It is caused by the tetanus germ that can enter your body through a scratch, cut, burn, thorn, prick, or even a sliver. These germs produce a powerful poison that can cause painful muscle contractions throughout your body. Tetanus is also called “lockjaw” which refers to the tight contraction of the jaw muscles.

Tetanus Germs Are Everywhere

Tetanus can be found on city streets, country roads, on the farm, at work, and in your own backyard. A tetanus infection is most likely to result from a puncture wound, especially one soiled by dirt. You should see your doctor immediately if you have a significant puncture wound. Prompt treatment improves chances for recovery.

Tetanus Kills

More than one-third of all people who get tetanus will die.

Tetanus Can Be Prevented?

Immunity is not acquired naturally, therefore, everyone needs the required doses of vaccine for complete protection. Once you have been vaccinated and have received booster shots at recommended intervals, you are protected against getting the disease.

When Are Tetanus Shots Needed?

Most adults have had a primary series of shots and only need booster shots every ten years. If you have not had any DTP (Diphtheria-Tetanus-Pertussis) shots or a tetanus shot, a series of three doses of tetanus vaccine is needed, the first two doses should be one month apart and the third one six months to a year later.

Adults usually receive a combination vaccine called Tetanus-diphtheria (Td).

Side Effects

Mild reaction

Soreness, redness, or swelling where the shot was given

If these problems occur, they usually start within hours to a day or two after the vaccination. They may last one to two days. Acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, Nuprin) may be taken to reduce the soreness.

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Severe reaction

These problems rarely happen:

- Serious allergic reaction, you will be asked to sit in the waiting room for 15 minutes after the shot so we can watch for this reaction.
- Deep aching pain and muscle wasting in upper arm; this starts two days to four weeks after the shot, and can last many months.

Although rare, a few cases of peripheral neuropathy and Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS) have been reported.

If you have a serious reaction to the vaccine or if you have any questions or other problems, call: the _____ Clinic at (612) _____ or Urgent Care at (612) 467-2771.

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VA Medical Center
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