

Tdap Vaccine: What Teens Need to Know

What is Tdap?

Tdap is a combination of three vaccines that protect against tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis.

Tetanus, also called lockjaw, is a disease caused by bacteria that affects the body's muscles and nerves.

Diphtheria is a respiratory disease caused by bacteria that can cause the breathing tube to be blocked.

Pertussis, or whooping cough, is a cough illness that can last for weeks or months. Often thought of as a childhood disease, but anyone of any age can get pertussis.

How are these diseases spread?

Tetanus bacteria are found in soil and can enter the body through cuts and scratches or open wounds. Tetanus cannot be spread from person to person.

Diphtheria and **pertussis** are spread person to person through droplets produced during coughing or sneezing. These droplets don't travel very far through the air and usually only infect persons within an arm's length.

What are the symptoms of these diseases?

Tetanus includes muscle spasms in the jaw, difficulty swallowing, and stiffness or pain in the muscles of the neck, shoulders, or back. The spasms can spread to the muscles of the chest and airway and interfere with breathing which could lead to death.

Diphtheria includes gradual onset of a sore throat and low-grade fever. It can lead to breathing problems, heart failure, and even death.

Pertussis starts with cold-like symptoms. After a week or so, a cough develops which worsens and begins to occur in sudden, uncontrollable bursts. Persons with pertussis may seem well between coughing spells, which may continue for several weeks or months. Vomiting can occur following coughing. While death from pertussis is rare in teenagers and adults, infants are at risk of developing serious

How can these diseases be prevented?

The best way to prevent tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis is to be vaccinated. Tetanus, diphtheria, acellular pertussis (Tdap) is a vaccine for adolescents and adults that protects against these diseases.

What should I know about the Tdap vaccine?

Tdap is given in place of one of the Td booster shots to add protection against pertussis. Like the Td shot, Tdap vaccine may make your arm sore.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that:

- Adolescents 11-12 years old get Tdap.
- Adolescents 13-19 years old who haven't already received Tdap, should also get it.

How can I learn more about the Tdap vaccine and the diseases it prevents?

Ask the nurse in your school health center or your healthcare provider.

Call your local health department's immunization program or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): 1-800-232-4636 (1-800-CDC-INFO).

Visit the following sites:

- [Minnesota Department of Health: Pertussis Basics](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/pertussis/basics.html)
(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/pertussis/basics.html)
- [CDC: Diphtheria, Tetanus, and Whooping Cough Vaccination: What You Should Know](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd/dtap-tdap-td/public/index.html)
(www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd/dtap-tdap-td/public/index.html)

What are other vaccines I should know about?

There are other vaccines you should get, including meningococcal vaccine and human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine. Check out [Vaccines for Infants, Children, and Adolescents](http://www.health.state.mn.us/people/immunize/basics/kids.html) (www.health.state.mn.us/people/immunize/basics/kids.html) or talk to your healthcare provider.

Minnesota Department of Health
PO Box 64975
St. Paul, MN 55164-0975
651-201-5503
www.health.state.mn.us/immunize

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To obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-201-5414.