

Preventing **Tetanus**, **Diphtheria**, and **Pertussis** Among Adults

Why do I need a Tetanus shot?

Tetanus shots protect you from the serious illness caused by tetanus bacteria. These bacteria can enter the body through a deep cut or puncture wound, such as one you might get from cutting yourself with a knife or by stepping on a dirty nail.

Tetanus infection causes a painful tightening of the muscles, usually all over the body. Particularly dangerous is the “locking of the jaw,” which can cause suffocation because you cannot open your mouth or swallow.

How often should I get a Tetanus shot?

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) recommends you get a tetanus booster shot at least every 10 years. This vaccine is called “Td” and is combined with diphtheria toxoid to also protect you from this rare and infectious respiratory infection. If you cannot remember when you had your last tetanus shot, it's a good idea to check your health records or contact your doctor to determine the date of your last shot. Due to the potential for adverse reactions, it is not advised to have the boosters closer together than 5 years. Remember to record the date of your vaccination in an easy-to-find place so you'll know when you need the next one.

Concentra supports use of the “Tetanus, Diphtheria and Pertussis” (Tdap) vaccination

Concentra agrees with the ACIP and CDC recommendation that adults age 19-64 years receive a single dose of the Tdap vaccination if it has been over 10 years since their last shot. For individuals who either lack protection against pertussis or who have close contact with infants less than one year old, Concentra recommends the Tdap vaccination more frequently.

The Tdap vaccination protects you from:

- Tetanus (as noted above)
- Diphtheria – causes a thick covering in the back part of the throat that can lead to breathing problems, paralysis, and heart failure
- Pertussis – also known as whooping cough, causes severe cough illness that is easily spread from person to person by coughing and sneezing; infected adults may have a prolonged cough and complications that may require hospitalization.

What happens if I'm hurt and don't know the date of my last Tetanus shot?

Many people cannot remember the date of their last tetanus vaccination, so it's important to know what to do if you do have an injury, such as blunt trauma to the flesh or stepping on a dirty nail.

You should rinse the wound with tap water and seek medical evaluation to remove dead or severely injured tissues. The risk for serious tetanus infection is increased if your injury occurred outdoors or the wound had contact with soil. Persons that develop tetanus infection may develop life-threatening symptoms including painful tightening of the muscles, breathing problems, or difficulty swallowing.

For more information about tetanus shots, you can ask your health care provider, or you can visit the National Institutes of Health's Web site at: www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/tetanus.html

Contact the benefits manager at your company, your health insurer, or your primary care provider to determine whether the cost of a tetanus shot is covered by your benefits plan.



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