

PROTECTION FROM TETANUS, DIPHTHERIA and PERTUSSIS Tdap SCHOOL IMMUNIZATION PROGRAM

Why Vaccinate for Tetanus, Diphtheria and Pertussis (Tdap)?

This vaccine is indicated for active immunization against tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis and will be offered as part of the grade 7 and grade 8 immunization program for the 2025-26 school year. Tdap vaccine given in grade 7 and 8 is a booster dose to previous routine childhood immunizations.

What is Tetanus (Lockjaw)?

Tetanus is caused by bacteria present in soil, dust and manure. The bacteria release a poison that could cause severe muscle spasms all over the body. Tightening of the jaw muscles can occur which prevents the person from opening their mouth. 60% of people who get tetanus will die from it.

What is Diphtheria?

Diphtheria is caused by bacteria that can infect the nose and throat and prevent proper breathing. It can also cause skin or ear infections, can lead to heart failure, nerve damage, or even death. 10% of people who get diphtheria will die from it.

What is Pertussis (Whooping Cough)?

Pertussis is caused by a bacterial infection that can be spread very easily from one person to another. It causes severe coughing that interferes with breathing. Complications of pertussis include seizures, convulsions, pneumonia, brain damage and death. Individuals who have been immunized may still get the disease, but in a much milder form. Pertussis is most serious in children under one year of age.

What are common side effects of the Tdap vaccine?

Side effects are usually mild and last only for a few days after the vaccine is administered. These may include:

- Mild pain, swelling and redness at the administration site
- A mild fever
- Loss of appetite
- Tiredness for a day or two

Who should NOT get vaccinated with Tdap?

- Individuals who are sick with a moderate to severe acute illness with or without fever.
- Individuals who are allergic to any component of the vaccine
- Individuals who have had a severe reaction to this vaccine in the past
- Individuals with a history of Guillain-Barre syndrome within 6 weeks of a previous tetanus vaccine dose.

Serious side effects or allergic reactions are rare and can include anaphylaxis, hives or difficulty breathing.

Contact your health care provider or go to the nearest emergency room immediately if you experience serious side effects.

For more information on immunization programs, contact your local public health office.