

TETANUS, DIPHTHERIA and PERTUSSIS

Vaccine Fact Sheet

(Adacel® or Boostrix® Vaccine)

WHAT IS TETANUS DISEASE AND HOW DOES IT SPREAD?

- Tetanus (also known as lockjaw) is caused by a toxin produced by *clostridium tetani*, which enters the body through a cut or wound in the skin
- The bacteria are naturally present in soil and the intestines of animals and humans
- Tetanus causes painful, prolonged muscle spasms of the jaw, neck, arms, leg, and stomach. Neurological damage and death can occur
- Occurs all over the world and does not spread from person to person

WHAT IS DIPHTHERIA AND HOW DOES IT SPREAD?

- Diphtheria is a very contagious, potentially life-threatening disease
- It mostly spreads from person to person through respiratory droplets. Rarely, diphtheria can also be spread by contact with contaminated objects
- Symptoms include a mild fever, sore throat, difficulty swallowing, extreme tiredness, and loss of appetite. In young children, the illness can progress to breathing difficulties and choking
- Serious complications of the heart and nervous system can also occur
- The toxin causes a greyish white membrane to develop in the throat that makes it difficult to breathe and can be fatal
- Diphtheria death rate is 5% to 10%. The highest rates are among unvaccinated infants or older adults and in countries where diphtheria is rare, and diagnosis is delayed
- It is now very rare in Canada because of immunization, but it is still common in other countries

WHAT IS PERTUSSIS AND HOW DOES IT SPREAD?

- Pertussis (whooping cough) is a highly contagious bacterial illness spread by respiratory droplets
- It causes violent coughing that can lead to choking or vomiting. The coughing can be so intense that a "whooping" sound is made when trying to catch the next breath
- The cough can last for weeks or months and without treatment, can cause brain damage or even death
- It is most dangerous for infants under one year of age, particularly those who are not vaccinated or not fully vaccinated, as it can cause them to stop breathing or have seizures
- Pertussis outbreaks occur in Ontario every two - five years

PUBLIC HEALTH

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HOW CAN TETANUS, DIPHTHERIA AND PERTUSSIS DISEASES BE PREVENTED?

- **Vaccination is the best protection against tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis.** This vaccine is safe and effective
- It is licensed for people who are four years and older (younger children need a different dosage of vaccine that can be received at a doctor's office)
- It is often given to previously vaccinated adolescents as a booster
- It is also recommended for adults who did not receive a pertussis-containing vaccine in adulthood
- Pregnant women should receive this vaccine between 27 and 32 weeks in every pregnancy
- Proof of vaccination against tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis, or a valid exemption, is required by law for all children attending school in Ontario

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF THIS VACCINE?

- Redness, swelling or pain at the injection site are the most common
- Fever, chills, headache and fatigue

WHO SHOULD NOT HAVE THIS VACCINE?

- People who have ever had ever had a severe allergic (anaphylactic) reaction to a previous dose of this vaccine
- People with a severe (anaphylactic) allergy to any vaccine component

WHO SHOULD CONSULT THEIR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER BEFORE VACCINATION?

People with complicated medical issues or previous severe reactions to vaccines should consult their health care provider before vaccination.