

Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis and Polio (Tdap-IPV) Vaccine

This fact sheet provides basic information. It is not intended to provide medical advice. It must not take the place of medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Always talk to a health care professional about any health concerns you have, and before you make any changes to your diet, lifestyle or treatment.

Immunization is one of the most effective ways to protect yourself and your family against vaccine preventable diseases.

What is tetanus (lock jaw)?

Tetanus is a serious disease that can happen if dirt with the tetanus germ gets into a cut in the skin. Tetanus germs are found everywhere, usually in soil, dust and manure. It does not spread from person to person. Tetanus causes cramping of the muscles in the neck, arms, leg and stomach, and painful convulsions which can be severe enough to break bones. Even with early treatment, tetanus kills two out of every 10 people who get it.

What is diphtheria?

Diphtheria is a serious disease of the nose, throat and skin. It causes sore throat, fever and chills. It can be complicated by breathing problems, heart failure and nerve damage. Diphtheria kills about one out of every 10 people who get the disease. It is most often passed on to others through coughing and sneezing. As a result of high vaccination rates, there have been no cases of diphtheria in Ontario since 1995.

What is pertussis (whooping cough)?

Pertussis is a common disease that causes prolonged cough illness in children, adolescents and adults. Pertussis is particularly serious in infants. This cough can cause a person to vomit or stop breathing for a short period of time. The cough can last for weeks and make it hard to eat, drink or even breathe. Pertussis can cause serious complications such as pneumonia. Pertussis can also cause brain damage and seizures, especially in babies.

Pertussis spreads very easily from an infected person to others through coughing or sneezing. Adults have been increasingly recognized as the main source for pertussis infection in infants and young children. Infected adults and adolescents can pass the disease to infants not yet fully protected and who are at greater risk of complications from pertussis.

What is polio?

Polio is a dangerous disease that people can get from drinking water or eating food with the polio germ in it. It is also spread from person to person. This disease can cause nerve damage and paralyze a person for life. It can paralyze muscles used for breathing, talking, eating and walking. It can also cause death. Although polio has been eradicated in the Americas, there is still a risk of catching this disease through travel or from cases that have been imported from abroad.

How well does Tdap-IPV vaccine protect against tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis and polio?

Tdap-IPV vaccine provides very good protection against tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis and polio. When given as a booster dose, it helps the immune system to continue to protect the body from these diseases. Protection does not last forever and a tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis (Tdap) booster dose is recommended when one is 14-16 years old, and once in adulthood if not received in the teen years, to maintain protection against these three diseases. Tetanus and diphtheria (Td) boosters are recommended every 10 years for adults. Although some individuals may acquire pertussis infection even though they have been vaccinated, the disease will usually be milder.

Who is eligible to receive the publicly funded vaccine?

In Ontario, individuals who have received their primary series (i.e., four doses of vaccine) for the prevention of tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis and polio should receive Tdap-IPV vaccine as a booster dose at 4-6 years of age. This dose should be given at the time of school entry.

Individuals 7 years of age and older who have not completed their primary series for prevention of tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis and polio should receive up to three doses of Tdap-IPV vaccine, depending on age and immune status. Protection can be given through this combined product or separate Tdap and IPV injections.

Who should not get the Tdap-IPV vaccine?

Persons with:

- a serious allergic reaction to a previous dose of a vaccine containing diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis and polio;
- a history of an allergic reaction to any part of the vaccine, including aluminum phosphate (adjuvant), 2-phenoxyethanol (preservative);
- a history of development of severe redness, swelling and ulceration at an injection site following a previous dose of vaccine containing tetanus and diphtheria;
- a history of encephalopathy (a disease of the brain) of undetermined cause within seven days of administration of a vaccine with pertussis components;
- a history of progressive or unstable neurological conditions (delay immunization until after treatment has been started and condition is stable); or
- a history of Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS), with no other identified cause, within eight weeks of a previous tetanus vaccine dose.

Consult with your health care provider if you are considering getting the vaccine and:

- have a severe infection with a fever higher than 38°C; or
- are pregnant or breastfeeding.

Is the Tdap-IPV vaccine safe?

Yes. Side effects of the Tdap-IPV vaccine are usually mild and last only a few days after getting the shot. The most common side effect is pain at the injection site. Redness and swelling may occur and a small number of people may have fever, vomiting, headache, diarrhea, nausea, chills, generalized body ache, decreased energy or sore and swollen joints after receiving the vaccine.

Allergic and other severe reactions are very rare.

There is no risk of a pregnant woman or anyone else catching any disease from someone who has been recently immunized.

Tdap-IPV is safe for people with medical conditions that impair the body's immune system.

You should always discuss the benefits and risks of any vaccine with your health care provider.

When should I call my health care provider?

Call your health care provider or go to the nearest hospital emergency department if any of the following symptoms develop within three days of receiving the vaccine:

- hives;
- swelling of the face or mouth;
- trouble breathing;
- very pale colour and serious drowsiness;
- high fever (over 40°C);
- convulsions or seizures; or
- any other serious or unusual symptoms.

Who should I talk to if I have any more questions about the Tdap-IPV vaccine?

Talk to your health care provider or call your local public health unit for more information. A list of local public health units can be found at: www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/contact/phu/phu_mn.html

Your record of protection

After any immunization, make sure your personal immunization record (i.e., the “yellow card”) is updated.