

# Tdap

## “What You Need to Know”

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

Tetanus, also known as “lockjaw”, produces painful muscle spasms, usually all over the body. It can also cause the jaw muscles to tighten and prevent the victim from opening their mouth or swallowing. One out of five people infected with tetanus die.

Diphtheria is a bacterial infection where the toxins produced cause a thick coating on the back of the throat that makes it difficult to breath or swallow. It can lead to breathing problems, paralysis, heart failure and death. It is very contagious and is spread by coughing and sneezing.

Pertussis, more commonly known as Whooping Cough, is also spread by coughing and sneezing. The toxins from this bacterial infection causes severe coughing, vomiting and disturbed sleep. The coughing can be severe enough to cause cracked ribs. Complications from pertussis can also include pneumonia and cause hospitalization. It is very common, but often misdiagnosed. As much as 10% of coughing illnesses lasting at least one week are thought to be Whooping Cough. Every year, as many as 1 million teenagers and adults are infected with pertussis. Usually those infected will cough for at least three weeks and half will cough for at least 9 weeks!

Tdap is the recommended tetanus vaccination for adolescents 11 years and up. It has been shown to decrease the incidence of pertussis by more than 90%. It is safe to give concurrently with the meningitis vaccination, also recommended for teenagers. The vaccine (Tdap) is also recommended for those adults 19-65 to have at least once in their lifetime. Tetanus boosters are recommended every 10 years, but no closer than 5 years apart. It is especially important for those having contact with very young children and having close patient contact to get the Tdap vaccine to prevent spreading pertussis to those most susceptible.

The Tdap vaccination is generally safe and effective; however some localized reactions may occur including pain or swelling at the injection site, headaches, nausea or fatigue. *Anyone who has ever had a life-threatening allergic reaction to any component of the vaccine or reactions including coma or seizures within 7 days of a previous dose of DTP or DTaP should not get this vaccination.*

Please contact the Visiting Nurse Service Immunization Programs Manager for further information on getting the vaccination. The number is 722-8299, ext. 296.

Visiting Nurse Service, Inc.  
4701 N. Keystone Ave.  
Indianapolis, IN 46205  
Phone: 317-722-8200 Fax: 317-722-8253 Website: [www.vnsi.org](http://www.vnsi.org)