

TETANUS

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Tetanus, also known as lockjaw, is an infection caused by bacteria that live in the soil and usually enter the body through a break in the skin as a result of a cut, puncture wound, deep scrape or burn. The bacteria produce a poison that causes seizures. It also will cause severe muscle spasms making it hard to open the mouth and difficult to swallow and breathe. Tetanus can be very dangerous and lead to death. Symptoms of tetanus start 7-8 days after tetanus bacteria enter the body and may also include: stiff muscles in the neck, shoulder and back, muscle spasms in the chest, abdomen, arms and legs, fever, sweating, high blood pressure, and an irregular heartbeat. Tetanus is diagnosed based on these symptoms and a good history and physical exam. Individuals who have tetanus usually need to be treated in a hospital. Recovery can take up to several months. Immunization can prevent almost all cases of tetanus.

PREVENTING TETANUS INFECTIONS:

A Primary Vaccination Series (DTaP):

- First shot: age 2 months
- Second shot: age 4 months
- Third shot: age 6 months
- Fourth shot: age 15 to 18 months
- Fifth shot: age 4 to 6 years

After the above is complete, a child should receive a tetanus booster between the ages of 11 and 12 years. After the age of 12, a tetanus booster shot usually is recommended every 10 years.



- All women of childbearing age should be immunized against tetanus. Newborns rely on their mother's tetanus immunity to protect themselves from tetanus until their own shots begin.

- Any wound should be cleaned thoroughly as soon as possible, especially if it is contaminated with dirt to reduce the risk of infection with the bacteria that cause tetanus.

MEDICAL CARE AND TREATMENT OPTIONS:

Call your family doctor immediately for any deep cut, puncture in the skin or any wound contaminated by dirt, manure, sewage, or flood water. If you are an adult, please check your shot records for the date of your last tetanus shot. If you are a parent, be sure your child's shots are all up-to-date. If you have any questions about tetanus immunization(s) please contact your Osteopathic Family Doctor.

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Source(s): Tetanus.gov, Up-To-Date, and Web MD.

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