

# February Newsletter

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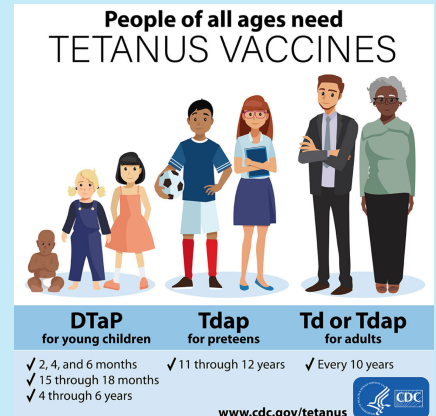
## Tetanus

Tetanus is a serious bacterial infection caused by the bacterium *Clostridium tetani*. This type of bacteria is commonly found in the form of a bacterial spore in soil, dust, and animal feces, and can enter the body through a wound or cut. Once inside the body, the bacteria produce a toxin that affects the nervous system, leading to muscle stiffness and spasms, including the muscles that control breathing. Tetanus is sometimes referred to as "lockjaw" because it causes intense, painful spasms of the masseter muscles, leading to an inability to open the mouth.

Tetanus infection is rare in people who have been fully vaccinated. Tetanus infection is more common in those who are unvaccinated or inadequately vaccinated against tetanus. Tetanus can be a life-threatening infection if left untreated. The disease causes muscle stiffness and spasms that lead to respiratory failure.

Tetanus infection is extremely painful; the muscle spasms can be so severe that they can cause bone fractures. If tetanus infection is suspected in an individual they should be immediately evaluated in the Emergency Department.

The best way to prevent tetanus is through vaccination. The tetanus vaccine is a combination vaccine that protects against tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (whooping cough). The vaccine is given in a series of five doses, with the first dose at age 2 months and the final of the five doses between ages 4 and 6. After the initial series of vaccines, a booster vaccine is recommended every 10 years.



During the initial childhood series the DTaP vaccine is given which has full doses of the tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis vaccines. As an adult, the Tdap vaccine is used for booster doses giving a full-strength dose of the tetanus vaccine and smaller doses of the diphtheria and pertussis vaccines to maintain immunity.

### Sources:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "DTaP, Tdap, and Td Vaccines: What You Need to Know." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 4 Jan. 2022, <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd/dtap-tdap-td/public/index.html>. Accessed 28 Feb 2023.

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