

ADULT WHOOPING COUGH BOOSTER VACCINE INFORMATION SHEET

Main points

- The dTpa booster vaccine protects against diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough (pertussis);
- Diphtheria is caused by a bacteria spread by respiratory droplets. It causes severe throat and breathing difficulties;
- Tetanus is caused by the toxin of a bacteria found in soil. It causes painful muscle spasms, convulsions and lockjaw;
- Pertussis is caused by a bacteria spread by respiratory droplets. It causes 'whooping cough', with a prolonged cough lasting up to 3 months;
- Up to 1 in 7 people who get diphtheria die. The bacteria release a toxin, which can produce nerve paralysis and heart failure;
- About 1 in 125 babies under the age of 6 months with whooping cough (pertussis) die from pneumonia or brain damage;
- About 1 in 10 people who receive the vaccine have local swelling, redness or pain at the injection site or fever;
- Serious reactions are very rare.

What are diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis?

Diphtheria is a serious infection of the nose and throat. About 1 in 7 people who get diphtheria will die. The bacteria are spread through the air by persons sneezing or coughing and by direct skin-to-skin contact. The disease can result in very severe breathing problems. It can also cause heart failure and paralysis.

Tetanus, also called "lockjaw", is caused by a bacteria mostly found in the soil. When the bacteria enter the skin through a cut or scrape, they produce a poison that can cause painful tightening of muscles all over the body. It is very serious if the breathing muscles are affected. Up to 1 in 5 people who get tetanus will die.

Pertussis, or "whooping cough", is a serious infection of the lungs and throat. About 1 in 125 babies under the age of 6 months with whooping cough (pertussis) die. The bacteria are easily spread through coughing, sneezing, or close face-to-face contact.

Pertussis can cause severe coughing that often ends with a whooping sound before the next breath. This cough can last several months and occurs more often at night. Pertussis can also cause pneumonia, convulsions, brain damage or death. These severe complications are seen most often in babies; however, older children and adults with pertussis often spread it to babies who are too young to be fully protected by the vaccine.

Who should get the dTpa booster vaccine?

dTpa vaccine is recommended for adolescents aged 15-16 years and for pregnant women during every pregnancy. This dose boosts immunity to tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis in children vaccinated earlier.

dTpa vaccine is also recommended for adults at age 50 and 65. It is also recommended every 10 years for people in contact with infants such as new parents, healthcare workers and childcare workers.

What are the benefits of getting the dTpa booster vaccine?

This vaccine is the best way to protect yourself or your child against diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis, which are serious and sometimes fatal diseases.

When you get immunised, you help protect others as well.

What are possible reactions after the vaccine?

Vaccines are very safe. It is much safer to get the vaccine than to get sick from any of these diseases.

Common reactions may include soreness, redness and swelling in the arm where the vaccine was given. Headache and mild fever may also occur.

It is important to stay in the clinic for 15 minutes after getting any vaccine because there is an extremely rare possibility of a life-threatening allergic reaction called anaphylaxis. This may include hives, difficulty breathing, or swelling of the throat, tongue or lips. If this happens after you leave the clinic, call 000. This reaction can be treated, and it occurs in less than 1 in a million people who get the vaccine.

Always report serious or unexpected reactions to VaxWorks Health on 1300 34 84 22 or to your GP.

Who should not get the dTpa booster vaccine?

Speak with clinic staff if you or your child has had a life-threatening reaction to a previous dose of diphtheria, tetanus or pertussis vaccine, or any component of the vaccine.

A history of extensive limb swelling or febrile convulsions after receiving DTP vaccines at a young age are not a contraindication to receiving the dTpa booster vaccine.

There is no need to delay getting immunised because of a cold or other mild illness. However, if you have concerns, speak with clinic staff.