

Vaccination against tetanus and diphtheria in Secondary 3

| August 2025 |

Vaccination,
the best protection

Vaccination is the best protection against tetanus, diphtheria, and their complications.

Vaccination against tetanus and diphtheria is recommended for teens aged 14 to 16. Two vaccines can be used:

- Combined tetanus and diphtheria vaccine (Td vaccine)
- Combined tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis (whooping cough) vaccine (Tdap vaccine)

It is safe to receive the Tdap vaccine even though the whooping cough component is not required. Possible reactions after vaccination are the same for both vaccines.



Diseases	Signs and symptoms	Possible complications
Tetanus	• Muscle spasms in the jaw • Vocal chord spasms • Muscle spasms throughout the body	• Respiratory and cardiac problems • Death (10 to 80% of cases)
Diphtheria	• Serious sore throat • High fever • Respiratory problems	• Cardiac problems • Paralysis • Death (5 to 10% of cases)
Whooping cough (if Tdap is used)	• Violent fits of coughing that can persist for months • Difficulty eating, drinking and breathing	• Ear infection • Pneumonia • Convulsions • Brain damage (1 case in 11,000) • Death, especially before the age of 3 months

Information on the Td and Tdap Vaccines

Vaccination is the best protection against tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis (whooping cough) and their complications. The Td and Tdap vaccines can be given to people aged 4 and older who require protection against these diseases. The Td or Tdap vaccine is usually given in Secondary 3.

Some symptoms may be caused by the vaccine (e.g. redness at the injection site). Other problems may occur by chance and are not related to the vaccine (e.g. cold, gastro, headache).

The Td and Tdap vaccines are safe. Most reactions are harmless and do not last long.

Frequency	Possible reactions to these vaccines	What to do
In most cases (more than 50% of people)	• Pain at the injection site • Fatigue, headache	• Apply a cold, damp compress at the injection site. • Use a medication for fever or discomfort, if needed. • See a health professional if symptoms are severe.
Very often (less than 50% of people)	• Redness and swelling at the injection site • Discomfort, dizziness, nausea, diarrhea, shivering	
Often (less than 10% of people)	• Fever • Loss of appetite, vomiting • Irritability, drowsiness (sleepiness) • Skin rash • Swollen lymph nodes	
Sometimes (less than 1% of people)	• Small lump for a few weeks at the injection site	
Very rarely (less than 1 person in 10,000)	• Sterile abscess at the injection site	

We recommend that you stay at the clinic for at least 15 minutes after vaccination because allergic reactions may occur. If an allergic reaction occurs, the symptoms will appear a few minutes after the vaccination. The person giving the vaccine will be able to treat this reaction immediately.

FOR ANY QUESTIONS,

contact the person giving the vaccine,
or Info-Santé 811 or a health professional.