

## Possible side effects of diphtheria and tetanus vaccine

Reactions to diphtheria and tetanus vaccine are much less frequent than the complications of the diseases.

### Common side effects

- Low grade fever
- Soreness, redness and swelling at the injection site
- A temporary small lump at the injection site

### Extremely rare side effects

- Brachial neuritis (severe pain in shoulder and upper arm)
- Severe allergic reaction

If mild reactions do occur, they may last one to two days. The side effects can be reduced by:

- Drinking extra fluids
- Not overdressing
- Placing a cold wet cloth on the sore injection site
- Taking (or giving your child) paracetamol to reduce any discomfort (note the recommended dose for the age of your child)

If reactions are severe or persistent, or if you are worried, contact your doctor or hospital.

### Pre-immunisation checklist

Before you or your child are immunised, tell the doctor or nurse if any of the following apply:

- Are unwell on the day of immunisation (temperature over 38.5°C)
- Have had a severe reaction to any vaccine
- Have a severe allergy to any vaccine component

## Further information

*The following websites offer resources and further information*

[www.health.vic.gov.au/immunisation](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/immunisation)

[www.immunise.health.gov.au](http://www.immunise.health.gov.au)



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## Diphtheria and tetanus Immunisation information



immunisation for life

**The National Immunisation Program Schedule provides free adult diphtheria and tetanus vaccine at age 50 years.**

## Diphtheria

Diphtheria is caused by bacteria which are found in the mouth, throat and nose. Diphtheria causes a membrane to grow around the inside of the throat. This can make it difficult to swallow, breathe and can even lead to suffocation.

The bacteria produce a poison which can spread around the body and cause serious complications such as paralysis and heart failure. Around 10% of people who contract diphtheria die from it.

Diphtheria can be caught through coughs and sneezes from an infected person.

## Tetanus

Tetanus is caused by bacteria which are present in soils, dust and manure. The bacteria can enter the body through a wound which may be as small as a pin prick. Tetanus cannot be passed from person to person.

Tetanus is an often fatal disease which attacks the nervous system. It causes muscle spasms first felt in the neck and jaw muscles (lock jaw). Tetanus can lead to breathing difficulties, painful convulsions and abnormal heart rhythms.

Because of effective immunisation, tetanus is now rare in Australia, but it still occurs in people who have never been immunised against the disease or who have not had their booster vaccines.

## ADT Booster<sup>®</sup> (Adult Diphtheria and Tetanus) immunisation

Diphtheria and tetanus can be prevented with the ADT Booster<sup>®</sup> vaccine. Although it is called 'Adult' diphtheria and tetanus vaccine, it is also used to protect children eight years of age or older against these diseases. ADT vaccine contains small amounts of the diphtheria and tetanus toxins which have been modified to make them harmless. The vaccine also contains a small amount of aluminium salt and a preservative.

### Who should be immunised?

A booster dose is recommended for everyone at the age of 50 to maintain immunity. For adults and older children who have never been immunised against diphtheria and tetanus, one dose of Boostrix<sup>®</sup> vaccine (diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough) followed by two doses of ADT Booster<sup>®</sup> vaccine at one month intervals are recommended. Two booster doses are then given at ten yearly intervals.

In the event of a tetanus prone injury, immunisation with ADT Booster<sup>®</sup> vaccine is recommended. Please see your doctor.

Ten yearly boosters of a tetanus vaccine are no longer routinely required.