

# Diphtheria, Tetanus, Acellular Pertussis (Whooping Cough) Vaccine (dTap)

**Immunization protects you from disease. Get protected, get immunized.**

- **Vaccines make your immune system stronger by building antibodies, which help prevent diseases.**
- **Immunization is safe. It is much safer to get immunized than to get these diseases.**

## **Who should have dTap vaccine?**

This vaccine is given to Grade 9 students. The Grade 9 dose may be given early if a child gets an open wound. If your child gets dTap vaccine early and they are 12 years of age (or older), they do not need to get the Grade 9 dose.

This vaccine may be offered to children 7 years of age and older whose immunizations are off the routine schedule.

This vaccine is given to adults. Talk to your healthcare provider if you were not immunized as a baby. You may need more than a dTap booster.

If you are pregnant, you should get this vaccine even if you have had it before. It will help protect your baby during the first few months of life, especially against pertussis. In Alberta, dTap vaccine is recommended in every pregnancy. It is usually given between 27 and 32 weeks of pregnancy. If you are outside of this time frame, talk to your healthcare provider about when you should get this vaccine.

## **How many doses of dTap vaccine are needed?**

The first time people get immunized for tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis, 3 doses are usually given over a period of time. This is called the primary series. People usually get this series as babies.

After the primary series, booster doses are needed to keep people protected. A booster dose is given to Grade 9 students and again to adults. Pregnant women need a dose of dTap every time they are pregnant. Other adults get 1 lifetime dose of dTap. After the 1 dose of dTap, they need a booster dose of Td (tetanus/diphtheria) vaccine every 10 years.

## **How well does the vaccine work?**

After the primary series and a booster dose, protection is:

- almost 100% for diphtheria and tetanus
- around 90% for pertussis

It is important to get booster doses because protection may weaken over time.

## **Where can I get the vaccine?**

The vaccine is offered to Grade 9 students in school. Information about the diseases and the vaccine will be sent to the parent or guardian. If you want your child to get the vaccine, you must fill out the consent form and return it to the school.

The vaccine can also be given at a public health office in your area.

Sometimes dTap is given at a doctor's office, walk-in clinic, urgent care centre or an emergency department to people at risk for tetanus after an injury or wound.

Pregnant women can get dTap vaccine at a public health office or pharmacy.

## **Are there side effects from dTap vaccine?**

Reactions to the vaccine are usually mild and go away in a few days. They may include:

- redness, swelling, and discomfort where the needle was given
- headache or dizziness
- feeling tired
- poor appetite, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea
- fever or chills
- rash

It is important to stay at the clinic for 15 minutes after immunization because people can have a rare but serious allergic reaction (anaphylaxis). If anaphylaxis happens, you will be given medicine to treat the symptoms.

Unusual reactions can happen. Call Health Link at 811 to report any unusual reactions.

### How can I manage side effects?

- To help with discomfort and swelling, put a cool, wet cloth over the area.
- If you need fever or pain medicine, check with your pharmacist or doctor. Do not give aspirin to anyone younger than 19 years old because it can cause serious health problems.
- Some people with health problems (e.g., weak immune system) must call their doctor if they get a fever. If you have been told to do this, call your doctor—even if you think the fever was due to immunization.

### Is there anyone who cannot have dTap vaccine?

You may not be able to have the vaccine if you have:

- an allergy to parts of the vaccine—always tell your healthcare provider about allergies.
- had a serious or unusual reaction after this vaccine (or a similar one)—always tell your healthcare provider if you have had reactions.

You can be immunized if you have a mild illness (e.g., cold), even if you have a fever.

### For More Information



Call Health Link at **811**



Go to [immunizealberta.ca](http://immunizealberta.ca)



Go to [myhealth.alberta.ca](http://myhealth.alberta.ca)

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## Disease Quick Facts

### Diphtheria

- nose and throat infection caused by bacteria
- can cause trouble breathing or swallowing, heart failure, and paralysis
- 1 out of 10 people who get diphtheria will die
- spread by coughing, sneezing, or close contact with an infected person

### Tetanus

- bacterial infection that causes spasms of the jaw (lock jaw) and other muscles
- can lead to trouble breathing, seizures, and death
- this bacteria is common in dirt, manure, and human stool and enters the body by a wound or animal bite
- tetanus disease is rare because a vaccine has been available since the 1940s

### Pertussis

- infection of the airways caused by bacteria
- causes coughing spells that can last for months
- coughing can be so bad it is hard to eat, drink, and breathe (especially for babies)
- can lead to pneumonia, seizures, brain injury, and death
- spread by coughing, sneezing, or contact with an infected person