

# Diphtheria, Tetanus, Polio Immunisation

## Introduction

This guide is for young people aged 12 to 15, and their parents or guardians. It explains:

- The tetanus, diphtheria, tetanus immunisation that is given to young people.
- why this immunisation is needed, and
- what side effects it might have.

The guide also answers some of the most common questions about these immunisations. It describes Td/IPV vaccine that boosts the protection you got as a child against tetanus (T), diphtheria (d) and polio (IPV – inactivated polio vaccine).

If you have any questions or want more information, talk to your doctor, school

nurse or the nurse at your doctor's surgery.



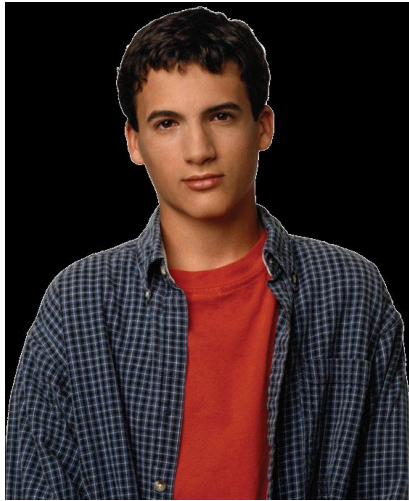
## Why do we need immunisation?

The national immunisation programme has meant that dangerous diseases, such as polio, have disappeared in the UK. But these diseases could come back – they are still around in many countries throughout the world. That's why it's so important for you to protect yourself. In the UK, diseases are kept at bay by the high immunisation rates.

## How do vaccines work?

A vaccine contains a small part of the bacterium or virus that causes a disease, or tiny amounts of the chemicals the bacterium produces. Vaccines work by causing the body's immune system to make antibodies (substances to fight infections and diseases). So if you come into contact

with the infection, the antibodies will recognise it and protect you.



## Tetanus, diphtheria, polio

### What is tetanus?

Tetanus is a painful disease affecting the nervous system which can lead to muscle spasms, cause breathing problems and can kill. It is caused when germs found in the soil and manure get into the body through open cuts or burns. Tetanus cannot be passed from person to person.

### What is diphtheria?

Diphtheria is a serious disease that usually begins with a sore throat and can quickly cause breathing problems. It can damage the heart and nervous system, and in severe cases, it can kill.

### What is polio?

Polio is a virus that attacks the nervous system which can cause permanent paralysis of muscles. If it affects the chest muscles or the brain, polio can kill.

### **If I was immunised against tetanus, diphtheria, polio and meningitis as a child, am I still protected?**

You may still have some protection, but you need these boosters to complete your routine immunisations and give you longer-term protection.

### **How many boosters do I need to have?**

You need a total of five doses of tetanus, diphtheria and polio vaccines to build up and keep your immunity. You should have had:

- the first three doses as a baby
- the fourth dose when you were between three and five years old, before you started school, and
- the fifth dose is due in year 10 (aged 14 to 15).

### **Will I need more boosters in the future?**

You will probably not need a further booster of this vaccine. However, you may need extra doses of some vaccines if you are visiting certain countries. Check with the nurse at your surgery.

### **How will I be given the Td/IPV booster?**

You will have two injections if you are also having Meningitis ACWY – one in each upper arm, or 2.5cm apart in the same arm. Nobody likes injections, but it is very quick. The needles used are small and you should feel only a tiny pinprick. If you are a bit nervous about having the

injection, tell the nurse or doctor before you have it.

### **Are there any reasons why I should not be immunised?**

There are very few teenagers who cannot have the Td/IPV vaccines.

You should not have the vaccines if you have had:

- a confirmed anaphylactic reaction to a previous vaccine,

There are no other medical reasons why these vaccines should not be given. If you are worried, talk to the nurse or doctor.

### **What if I am ill on the day of the appointment?**

If you have a minor illness without a fever, such as a cold, you should have the immunisations. If you are ill with a fever, put the immunisations off until you have recovered. This is to avoid the fever being associated with the vaccines and the vaccines increasing the fever you already have. If you have:

- had a bleeding disorder, or
- had convulsions (fits) not associated with fever

Speak to your doctor or nurse before having the immunisation.

### **Are there any side effects?**

It is common to get some swelling, redness or tenderness where you have the injection. Sometimes a small painless lump develops, but this usually disappears in a few weeks. More serious effects are rare but include fever, headache, dizziness, feeling sick and swollen glands.

If you feel unwell after the immunisation, take paracetamol or ibuprofen. Read the instructions on the bottle carefully and take the correct dose for your age. If necessary, take a second dose four to six hours later. If your temperature is still high after the second dose, speak to your GP or call the free NHS helpline 111.

It is not recommended that these medicines are given before or after vaccination in anticipation of a fever.

Remember, if you are under 16 you should not take medicines that contain aspirin.

## **Where can I get more information?**

For general information about teenage vaccinations, visit the website at [www.nhs.uk/vaccinations](http://www.nhs.uk/vaccinations)

For non-urgent advice call the free NHS helpline 111.