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Fact Sheet

Tetanus – Diphtheria – Acellular Pertussis (dTap) – Adacel

This vaccine is available for students to booster immunity to tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis (Whooping Cough). This is a booster dose to vaccines your child received as part of routine childhood immunization.

1. What are the complications of having these diseases?

Diphtheria This disease is caused by bacteria that infect the nose and throat. The bacteria release a poison that may cause breathing problems (the throat may actually close over as a result of a greyish membrane developing). In addition, heart failure and paralysis may occur. Diphtheria is spread like a cold, by coughing and sneezing. The disease used to cause many deaths among Canadian children with about 5% dying. The bacteria which causes diphtheria is still found in the throat or on the skin of children in Canada but because of this vaccine, diphtheria is now very rare here.

Tetanus This disease is caused by a bacteria which is everywhere, particularly in the soil. It often enters the body when the skin is cut or punctured and was called “lock jaw” because those with tetanus could not open their mouth. The disease often resulted in death before there was a vaccine. Today, tetanus is very rare in Canada due to the use of the vaccine.

Pertussis (Whooping Cough) Whooping Cough is a very contagious disease which can cause a severe cough at any age. Although it is most severe in young children, whooping cough can cause a serious illness at any age and adults who have the disease often spread it to other adults or children.

2. What are the contents of the vaccine?

The vaccine contains the antigens for tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis and the preservative aluminum phosphate and 2 phenoxyethanol.

3. What are the possible reactions from the vaccine?

The information regarding reactions is compiled from years of experience from using these vaccines. Parents/guardians of children who receive this vaccine should be aware of the following possible reactions:

1. Redness, swelling, induration and/or tenderness at the site where the vaccine is given.
2. Fever, headache, decreased energy, body ache, chills, nausea or diarrhea can occur after receiving this vaccine.

The most serious but rare side effect, is a severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) which can be life threatening and occurs within 15-20 minutes of receiving the vaccine. Procedures are in place to quickly respond to anaphylaxis. Public health nurses are trained to treat the condition by giving adrenaline and to closely monitor the situation.

4. What are the situations in which the vaccine should not be given?

- 1) Children who have had an anaphylactic (severe or life-threatening) reaction to any of the components of this vaccine should not receive the vaccine.
- 2) Those who are ill or have a fever should have this vaccine at a later date.

NOTE: The pertussis vaccine used in the past often resulted in reactions, particularly fever, and was different than the pertussis used in this vaccine. The pertussis antigens in this vaccine have been purified and reactions from this vaccine are much less likely and much less severe than the vaccine available before. Those who have had a reaction to pertussis (other than anaphylaxis) can receive this vaccine.

Students who have had pertussis (Whooping Cough) disease can receive this vaccine.

5. What are the alternatives to not receiving the vaccine?

Non-immunized persons are at increased risk of acquiring tetanus or diphtheria. The death rate from diphtheria is 5% to 10% and tetanus is an acute and often fatal disease.

Pertussis (Whooping Cough) is still very common in PEI with outbreaks occurring about every three years. Those who get pertussis may have a severe cough for several weeks and be very contagious for others.