



What is tetanus?

Tetanus is a serious disease caused by a toxin made by tetanus bacteria. It causes muscle stiffness and muscle spasms. The muscle stiffness usually involves the jaw and neck and then becomes generalized throughout the rest of the body.

Who gets tetanus?

Anyone may get the disease, regardless of age. If a person has suffered a wound or injury and has not been adequately immunized with vaccine and received a booster dose every ten years, tetanus may occur. Most current cases occur in older adults who have not gotten a booster dose of vaccine every 10 years to maintain protective antibodies.

How is tetanus spread?

Tetanus germs are introduced into the body, usually through a puncture wound contaminated with soil, dust or animal or human feces. It may also be introduced through cuts, burns, small or unnoticed wounds, or by contaminated street drugs. Tetanus may follow elective surgery, ear infections, or dental infection. Tetanus is not spread from human to human.

What are the symptoms of tetanus?

Symptoms are characterized by painful muscle contractions, stiffness and convulsive spasms of especially the jaw and neck muscles and the upper body or trunk muscles. A common first sign suggestive of tetanus in older children and adults is painful stiffness of stomach muscles.

How long do symptoms occur after injury and introduction to tetanus spores?

Illness will usually start in 3-21 days. It may occur within 1 day depending on the type and location of the wound. It usually starts of 7-10 days after infection with the spore.

What is the treatment for tetanus?

Antibiotics play almost no role in the treatment of tetanus. Antitoxins may be used.

How can tetanus disease be prevented?

Tetanus can be prevented by vaccination.

Does tetanus vaccine cause reactions?

Local adverse events (e.g., redness, hardness and, pain at the injection site) are common but are usually self-limited and require no therapy. Fever and other systemic symptoms are uncommon.

Where can a person receive tetanus vaccine?

Children and adults get tetanus vaccine at the health departments or from a doctor's office.