

Vaccines (also called “needles” or “baby shots”) are the best way to protect against some very serious infections. The Canadian Paediatric Society and the National Advisory Committee on Immunization strongly recommend routine immunization.

Tdap, also known as **Adacel**, is a three-in-one needle. It protects children and adolescents against pertussis, diphtheria, and tetanus. The law requires vaccination against diphtheria and tetanus for all children attending daycare or school in Ontario (unless exempted).

What is Diphtheria?

Diphtheria is a serious disease of the nose, throat, and skin. It causes sore throat, fever and chills. It can also cause breathing problems, heart failure, and nerve damage. Diphtheria kills one out of every 10 people who get the disease. It is passed to others through coughing and sneezing.

What is Tetanus?

Tetanus (or lockjaw) is a serious disease that can happen if dirt with the tetanus germ gets into a cut in the skin. Tetanus germs are found everywhere, usually in soil, dust, and manure. If you have a cut infected with the tetanus germ, you may get tetanus. It does not spread from person to person. The bacteria in the wound make a poison. The poison causes cramping of the muscles in the neck, arms, leg, and stomach, and painful convulsions that can be severe enough to break bones. Even with early treatment, tetanus kills two out of every 10 people who get it.

What is Pertussis?

Pertussis or whooping cough is a serious disease, especially in children. Children who get this disease have violent coughing. This cough can cause them to vomit or briefly stop breathing. The cough can last for weeks, and make it hard for a child to eat, drink, or even breathe. Pertussis can cause serious complications, like pneumonia, convulsions, brain damage – even death. Pertussis spreads very easily through coughing or sneezing. While pertussis vaccine has been used in Canada for about 50 years, the newest type of vaccine has fewer side effects and offers better protection against the disease.

Who should receive the Tdap vaccine?

Adolescents or adults who have been immunized previously, but need a booster dose of tetanus and diphtheria, can receive one dose of Adacel vaccine if they also want protection against pertussis. Ontario teens are routinely immunized with Tdap at 14-16 years old. Adacel can be given to children over seven years of age who were not immunized in early infancy or who missed their four to six year old booster dose.

This vaccine may be given with other vaccines at separate sites using separate needles. If your child misses a needle, you should get the next needle as soon as possible. Your family health care provider will tell you when to return for future needles.

How well does Tdap vaccine protect my child and me?

When Tdap vaccine is given as a booster dose, it protects:

- about 100 per cent of people against tetanus
- over 97 per cent of people against diphtheria
- approximately 85 per cent of people against pertussis

Is the Tdap vaccine safe?

Yes. Serious side effects are rare. Mild pain, swelling, and redness for a few days are common at the spot where the needle was given. Some children/ adolescents get a fever, lose their appetite, or are achy or drowsy for a day or two after the vaccination. Your family health care provider may suggest you give your child a medicine called acetaminophen to prevent pain and fever.

The effects of Adacel on pregnant women and nursing mothers have not been assessed. Vaccination in pregnancy is not recommended unless there is a definite risk of acquiring pertussis.

Call your family health care provider or local hospital if you or your child has any of the following within three days of getting the needle:

- high fever (over 40°C or 104°F)
- crying for more than three hours
- convulsions or seizures
- very pale color and serious drowsiness
- hives (itchy rash)
- swelling of the face or mouth
- trouble breathing
- other serious problems

Who should not get the Tdap vaccine?

Your family health care provider may decide not to give you or your child's needle or may give a different vaccine if you or your child has:

- a high fever or serious infection worse than a cold
- had an allergic reaction to a previous dose of any vaccine containing tetanus, diphtheria, or pertussis
- a severe allergy to any parts of the vaccine or another vaccine that contains: aluminum phosphate, 2-phenoxyethanol, formaldehyde, gluteraldehyde
- religious or philosophical objections to any part of the vaccine
- children less than seven years old
- anyone who developed Guillain-Barre Syndrome within eight weeks of a previous dose of a vaccine containing tetanus
- women who are or may be pregnant

Whom should I talk to if I have any more questions about the Tdap vaccine?

Talk to your family health care provider or the Huron County Health Unit (519-482-3416) for more information.

Your Record of Protection

After you or your child receives any immunization, make sure the doctor updates the yellow personal Immunization Record card. Keep it in a safe place!