

DEFEND AGAINST TETANUS, DIPHTHERIA, AND PERTUSSIS



Tdap, DTaP, and Td vaccines protect against three serious bacterial infections.

Tetanus

Causes painful muscle stiffness and spasms that can interfere with breathing. The bacteria enter the body through cuts, puncture wounds, or contaminated injuries. It is not spread from person to person.¹

Diphtheria

Diphtheria can occur as a respiratory or cutaneous infection. Respiratory diphtheria affects the nose and throat and can cause weakness, sore throat, mild fever, swollen neck glands, and a thick gray coating that can make breathing or swallowing difficult. Cutaneous diphtheria affects the skin and typically causes sores or ulcers with redness, swelling, and scaling or peeling skin.² Diphtheria spreads from person to person through respiratory droplets from coughing or sneezing and through close contact with infected skin lesions.³

Pertussis (Whooping Cough)

Starts with cold-like symptoms and develops into severe coughing fits, often followed by a “whoop” sound, that may lead to vomiting and difficulty breathing. Whooping cough can lead to serious complications for infants, including apnea (life-threatening pauses in breathing), pneumonia, and in some cases, death.⁴ It is highly contagious and spreads easily through coughing and close contact, especially in homes and schools.⁵

When is vaccination recommended?⁶

Vaccine	Recommended at	Protects Against
DTaP (5-dose series)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2, 4, and 6 months• 15-18 months• 4-6 years	Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis
Tdap	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 11-12 years• Adults (Booster recommended every 10 years)• Pregnant people (between 27-36 weeks)	
Td	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adults (Booster recommended every 10 years)	Tetanus, Diphtheria

Because protection decreases over time, adults should receive a tetanus booster every 10 years.⁷ A Tdap vaccination is recommended during every pregnancy, preferably between 27 and 36 weeks. This allows protective antibodies to pass to the baby before birth.⁸ Babies cannot begin their own vaccine series until 2 months of age, making maternal vaccination critical for early protection. Vaccination is the best way to defend yourself and others against tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis.

Recent Trends in Texas: Pertussis

Pertussis cases are rising in Texas. In 2025, Texas reported approximately 3,500 confirmed cases – about four times more than in 2024.⁹ Staying up to date on DTaP and Tdap vaccination helps protect families and communities.

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1. <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/vaccine-preventable-diseases/vaccine-preventable-disease-conditions/tetanus>
2. <https://www.cdc.gov/diphtheria/symptoms/index.html>
3. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/diphtheria>
4. <https://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/signs-symptoms/index.html>
5. <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/vaccine-preventable-diseases/pertussis-whooping-cough>
6. <https://www.cdc.gov/diphtheria/vaccines/index.html>
7. <https://www.cdc.gov/tetanus/vaccines/index.html>
8. <https://www.acog.org/womens-health/experts-and-stories/ask-acog/why-should-i-get-tdap-during-pregnancy>
9. <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/news-alerts/health-alert-increase-pertussis-cases-texas>

Talk to your doctor
about **protecting**
yourself today.



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