

# Protection against tetanus, diphtheria and polio



This leaflet is for young people and their parents or guardians. It explains the teenage booster vaccine that is offered at around 13 to 14 years of age to provide protection against tetanus, diphtheria and polio. This vaccine is sometimes called the Td/IPV.

## **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, for example, when germs found in 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 and 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 and polio as a child, am I still protected?**

Yes. You will have some protection, but you need this booster to complete your routine immunisations and give you longer-term protection.

## How many doses do I need to make sure I am protected?

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

- the first three doses as a baby;
- the fourth dose at around three to four years old (before you started school); and
- the fifth dose at around 13 to 14 years old (usually in year 9 at school).

You may need more doses for certain jobs or travel.

If you think you have missed any of the routine doses, speak to your nurse or doctor.

**It's not too late to get up to date.**

## When and where will I get the booster?

In most areas in Wales, the Td/IPV vaccine is routinely offered in year 9. In a few areas, it is only offered in your GP's surgery.



## **What do I need to do?**

If you receive a consent form at school, make sure you and your parent or guardian read the information, sign it and return the form to school as soon as possible.

It's best to involve your parent or guardian, but in some circumstances you can give permission yourself if you fully understand what is being offered.

If you live in an area where the vaccine is not given in school, you will be invited to have it at your GP's surgery.

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

The Td/IPV is given as an injection in your upper arm at the same time as the MenACWY vaccine that helps to protect against meningococcal disease. If you are a bit nervous about having injections, tell the nurse or doctor.

## **Are there any other immunisations I need to have now?**

The Td/IPV and MenACWY vaccines are likely to be the last of your childhood vaccines, so it's a good idea to check with the person giving you the injections that all your other immunisations for example, MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) are up to date. If you have never had the MMR vaccine, you should have one dose now and another a month later.

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

There are very few teenagers who cannot have the Td/IPV vaccine. You should not have the Td/IPV vaccine if you have had a severe (life-threatening) reaction to any ingredient or to a previous dose of diphtheria, tetanus or polio vaccine.

## 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 still have the immunisations. If you are ill with a fever, put the immunisations off until you are better. This is to avoid the fever being associated with the vaccines and the vaccines increasing the fever you already have.

Speak to your doctor or nurse before having the immunisation if you have:

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



## Are there any side effects?

Your arm may be sore with some swelling, redness or tenderness where you have had the injection. Sometimes a small painless lump develops, but this usually disappears within a few weeks. More serious effects are rare but include fever, headache, dizziness, feeling sick and swollen glands.

Very rarely, some people have an allergic reaction soon after a vaccination. This may be a rash or itching affecting part or all of the body.

Even more rarely, some people can have a severe reaction soon after vaccination, which causes breathing difficulties and may cause them to collapse. This is called an anaphylactic reaction and can happen with other medicines and food. These reactions are extremely rare and nurses are trained to manage them. People who have an anaphylactic reaction can be successfully treated and usually recover within a few hours.

If you have a fever and feel unwell after the immunisation, take paracetamol or ibuprofen. Read the instructions on the bottle or packet 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 on 0845 46 47.

It is not recommended that you take these medicines before or after a vaccination just because you expect to get a fever.

**Remember, never give medicines that contain aspirin to children under 16.**



## Where can I get more information?

You can find out more about the vaccine, including its contents and possible side effects at [www.medicines.org.uk/emc/](http://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/) by entering the name of the vaccine in the search box and looking at the patient information leaflet (PIL). The vaccine currently used is Revaxis.

You can find more information on the Td/IPV vaccine (also known as 3:1 teenage booster) at [www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/doityourself/vaccinations/3in1teenagebooster/](http://www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/doityourself/vaccinations/3in1teenagebooster/)

If you have any questions talk to your doctor or nurse or, call NHS Direct Wales on **0845 46 47**, or **111** if this service is available in your area. For more information visit [www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/](http://www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/)

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