

Tetanus



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مركز الأمراض الإنتقالية
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Tetanus

Introduction

Tetanus is an acute severe disease characterized by muscle rigidity and spasms caused by bacterial toxins. Tetanus spores are universally present in soil. Transmission results from contamination of a wound by bacteria.

The Illness

Incubation is between 4 and 21 days (the average incubation period is ten days) but can vary from one day to several months.

Tetanus toxin spreads through the bloodstream and can cause serious damage to the nervous system.

Early symptoms of the disease include:

- stiffness of the jaw muscles (lockjaw)
- difficulties swallowing breathing
- muscle spasms.

Treatment

Initial treatment involves:

- Prompt wound care/debridement and the use of antibiotics
- Human tetanus immunoglobulin (HTIG) may be indicated
- Tetanus vaccination is administered if there is an inadequate or incomplete immunization history (less than five lifetime doses); natural infection does not induce immunity
- Symptomatic treatment

Vaccination

Tetanus can be prevented through immunization with tetanus-toxoid (TT) containing vaccines.

A combination vaccine is available to protect adults against diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis (Tdap), or in combination with diphtheria (TD).

People who recover from tetanus do not have natural immunity and can be infected again; therefore, it is recommended these individuals be immunized.

To be protected for life, an individual should receive three doses of diphtheria/tetanus/pertussis vaccine at infancy, followed by booster doses every ten years.

Recommendation

Travelers should ensure that they have had a primary course of vaccines and receive a booster every ten years if they are traveling to an area where tetanus is a high risk.