

DTaP / Tdap / DTP / Td
Are you confused about what vaccine you or your child needs?

Diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis are all diseases caused by bacteria. All three can cause severe illness and death. Diphtheria and pertussis are spread from person to person. Tetanus enters the body through cuts or wounds.

Diphtheria causes a sore throat and thick covering in the back of the throat, and it can lead to breathing problems. Diphtheria is rare in the United States due to the vaccine that prevents it, but it is still common in developing countries without active immunization programs.

Tetanus is a bacteria found in dirt and soil mixed with animal waste. This contaminated soil can enter the body through cuts and puncture wounds. This is why we get a Tetanus vaccine when we step on a dirty nail. Tetanus causes painful tightening of the muscles all over the body. It is also called lockjaw because it can lead to “locking” of the jaw so the victim cannot open his or her mouth or swallow. Tetanus leads to death in up to 2 out of 10 cases. Of those who survive, nearly all will spend weeks on a ventilator.

Pertussis (whooping cough) causes persistent coughing spells that make it difficult for infected people to breathe. These spells can last for weeks. It can also cause pneumonia. We have seen a sharp rise in pertussis cases in Marin this year.

Three vaccine formulations are available to protect against these diseases. DTaP vaccine is given to children 6 weeks to 6 years of age to protect them from all 3 illnesses. It is given at 2 months, 4 months, 6 months, 15-18 months, and 4-6 years. DTaP produces fewer side effects and is a safer version of an older vaccine called DTP, which is no longer used in the United States.

Tdap vaccine is licensed for people 10 years through 64 years of age. Tdap contains a lower concentration of diphtheria and pertussis toxoids than DTaP. Tdap is given at 11-12 years. Adolescents and adults who have not yet received it should get a one time dose of Tdap at the time of their next tetanus booster.

A vaccine against tetanus and diphtheria only, Td, is recommended every 10 years thereafter (or sooner if you have a wound). Td can be given to anyone 7 years of age and older.

Follow these general guidelines:

6 weeks through 6 years	DTaP
7-9 years of age	Td
10 years through 64 years	Tdap (especially if you have close contact with an infant) or Td
65 or older	Td (or talk to your doctor if you have close contact with an infant)

References: <http://www.cdc.gov>
<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/pinkbook/pink-chapters.htm>

This information is provided by the Marin County Immunization Coalition
www.immunizemarin.org