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University Health Board

## **Tetanus Vaccine (Revaxis) Advice**

### **What is tetanus?**

Tetanus is a painful disease that affects the nerves and causes muscle stiffness which can cause breathing problems. It is caused when Tetanus bacteria, found in the soil and the manure of animals such as horses and cows, get into the body through open cuts or burns, animal bites, eye injuries, body piercings, tattoos and injection of contaminated drugs. It affects the nervous system, and it can kill. Tetanus bacteria can survive for a long time outside the body, and once it enters the body they can quickly multiply and release a toxin that affects the nerves, causing symptoms such as muscle stiffness and spasms. Tetanus cannot be spread from person to person.

### **When, how and why is the vaccine given?**

We give Revaxis, a vaccine which helps boost protection against 3 different diseases - Tetanus, Diphtheria and Polio, to patients with a tetanus prone open cut or burn who have not received their full course or booster vaccinations. It is usually given as an injection in the upper arm. It boosts the protection you were given as a child against tetanus, diphtheria and polio.

The full course of the vaccination requires five injections, usually given on the following schedule:

- The first three doses are given as part of the 6-in-1 vaccine at 8, 12 and 16 weeks for all babies born on or after August 1 2017.
- A booster dose is given as part of the 4-in-1 pre-school booster at age three years and four months.
- A final booster is given as part of the 3-in-1 teenager booster at age 14.

This course of five injections should provide long-lasting protection against tetanus.

You may also have been prescribed antibiotics to take and /or given tetanus immunoglobulin which is a medication containing antibodies that kill the tetanus bacteria. It provides immediate, but short-term, protection from tetanus.

### **Are there any side effects?**

Where side effects do occur they are most likely to appear within 48 hours of the vaccine being given. If you have any concern, contact either your GP or the Emergency Department

<b>Common side effects at the injection site:</b>	<b>Other possible side effects</b>
Pain, swelling and redness and sometimes a small painless lump develops which usually disappears in a few weeks	Fever, Convulsions, dizziness, allergic reaction, swollen glands.

### **What should I do if I feel unwell after the immunisation?**

Take Paracetamol - follow the instructions on the packet/bottle.

If necessary, a second dose should be taken four to six hours later.

If your temperature is still high after the second dose, then please speak to a GP.

Although very rare, tetanus can be very serious. It is very important that you re-attend the department immediately should you develop any of the following symptoms:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pain and stiffness around the wound</li><li>• Jaw stiffness</li><li>• Muscle spasms</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Difficulty swallowing</li><li>• Difficulty in breathing</li><li>• Fever and Sweating</li></ul>
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**Do I need to let my GP know I have had the vaccine?**

Yes, please take the letter you have been given to your GP as soon as possible.

They will be able to update your immunisation records, and if necessary complete your immunization. If you are not registered with a GP it is important that you now do so and complete your full immunisation schedule.

**If you are at all concerned about your injury please contact the relevant Emergency Department or Minor Injury Unit (MIU):**

**Royal Gwent Hospital: 01633 234056**

**Nevill Hall Hospital: 01873 732073**

**Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr (YYF) MIU 01443 802353 or 802349**

**Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan (YAB) MIU: 01495 363318**

**Reference:**

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/tetanus/>

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Mae’r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg”.**