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Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Aneurin Bevan
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. Tetanus bacteria are commonly found in soil and the manure of animals such as horses and cows. It can get into the body through open cuts, burns, tears in the skin, from animal bites, eye injuries, body piercings, tattoos and injection of contaminated drugs. Tetanus can't be spread from person to person.

Tetanus bacteria can survive for a long time outside the body and if they enter the body through a wound they can quickly multiply and release a toxin that affects the nerves, causing symptoms such as muscle stiffness and spasms.

Symptoms of tetanus

The symptoms of tetanus usually start around 4 to 21 days after infection. On average, they start after around 10 days.

The main symptoms of tetanus include stiffness in your jaw muscles (lockjaw), which can make it difficult to open your mouth, painful muscle spasms which can make it difficult to breathe and swallow, a high temperature, sweating, and a rapid heartbeat.

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.
- A booster dose is given as part of the 4-in-1 pre-school booster at age 3 years 4 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. The immunoglobulin 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

Common side effects at the injection site:	Other possible side effects:
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.

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 do so now.

Please remember

Although very rare, tetanus can be very serious. It's very important that you attend the Emergency Department at the Grange University hospital (Not Minor injury unit) immediately should you develop any of the following symptoms:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain and stiffness around the wound • Jaw stiffness • Muscle spasms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty swallowing • Difficulty in breathing • Fever and Sweating
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**If you are at all concerned about your injury, please contact the relevant
Emergency Department: Grange University Hospital: 01633 493287
Or Minor Injury Unit (MIU):
Royal Gwent Hospital: 01633 234056
Nevill Hall Hospital: 01873 732073
Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr (YYF) MIU 01443 802353
Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan (YAB) MIU: 01495 363318**

Tetanus travel jab

As tetanus is found throughout the world, you should make sure you're fully vaccinated before travelling abroad. Please contact your GP surgery for advice before travelling abroad, if you have not been fully vaccinated against tetanus, or you're going to an area with limited medical facilities and your last vaccine dose was more than 10 years ago. You'll be offered the 3-in-1 teenage booster, which also protects against diphtheria and polio.

Reference: Tetanus - NHS

**This document is available in Welsh/
Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg**