



Adacel™ Vaccine

(diphtheria, tetanus and acellular pertussis)

Important Information for High School Students/ Parents

The Immunization of School Pupils Act (1982) states that all students in school must have up-to-date immunization for their age on file with the Health Unit. The Act does allow for a medical or conscientious objection to immunization. To obtain this, a Health Unit form must be completed and filed with the Health Unit. Students with incomplete immunization records may be suspended from school for 20 days or until the required immunization is received and the Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit is notified.

Babies and young children are routinely immunized against diphtheria, pertussis (whooping cough), tetanus and polio. This primary immunization is normally completed when the child is four to six years old. After that, a “booster” dose of diphtheria and tetanus is required every 10 years. Since 2003, Adacel vaccine has been used. It includes pertussis (whooping cough) as well as diphtheria and tetanus. This booster dose is normally given at 14-16 years of age.

The tetanus and diphtheria (Td) components of the Adacel vaccine are required for school attendance as legislated through the Immunization of School Pupils Act (1992).

Some students may have received Adacel or Td from the family doctor. Also, some students may have received Adacel or Td in a hospital emergency room if they had received treatment for a cut, dog bite, burn or any type of dirty wound that caused a break in the skin. If you think you have had a Td or Adacel vaccination, please fill in the Adacel consent form (included) with the date and place that the needle was given and return the completed form to the Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit.

What is tetanus (lockjaw)?

It is a serious disease that can happen when dirt containing the tetanus spore gets into a break in the skin. It does not spread from one person to another. It causes severe cramping of the muscles in the neck, arms, legs and stomach, and painful convulsions. Even with early treatment, it causes death in two out of every 10 people who get it.

What is diphtheria?

It is a serious disease of the nose, throat and skin that is passed on to others through coughing and sneezing. It causes sore throat, fever and chills and can have complications of breathing problems, heart failure and nerve damage.

What is pertussis (whooping cough)?

Whooping cough is a respiratory disease that spreads very easily by coughing and sneezing. It is a frequent cause of a prolonged coughing illness in teenagers who can then pass it on to infants and young children.

Whooping cough is very serious in infants and young children. They have spells of violent coughing with mucous, followed by a crowing sound or whoop. This is often followed by vomiting. The cough can cause breathing to stop for a short period of time. The cough can last for weeks and make it hard to hear, swallow or even breathe.

Is Adacel vaccine safe?

Yes. Mild pain, swelling and redness for a few days are common at the spot where the needle was given. A few people may get a mild fever, lose their appetite or feel tired for a day or two after the needle. The benefits of this vaccine are much greater than the risks associated with getting the diseases.

Who should not get the vaccine?

Adacel vaccine should not be given if the person has a:

- High fever or serious infection worse than a cold.
- Serious allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to previous doses of diphtheria, tetanus or pertussis vaccine.
- Severe allergy to any component of the vaccine.

What should I do if serious side effects do occur?

You should go to your doctor/nurse practitioner or the nearest emergency department if any of the following symptoms occur within three days of getting the needle:

- Hives.
- Swelling of the mouth and throat.

- Trouble breathing, hoarseness or wheezing.
- High fever (over 39° C or 103° F).
- Convulsions or seizures.
- Other serious reactions to the vaccine.

Will I get a record of this vaccination?

The nurse will provide you with a record of this vaccination. It is very important to keep this record. You may need proof of this at a later time.

For more information, please contact a member of the Vaccine Preventable Disease Team by calling the Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit at 519-426-6170 or 905-318-6623.

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