

# DIPHTHERIA TETANUS & PERTUSSIS VACCINES

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

### 1 Why get vaccinated?

Diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis are serious diseases caused by bacteria. Diphtheria and pertussis are spread from person to person. Tetanus enters the body through cuts or wounds.

**DIPHTHERIA** causes a thick covering in the back of the throat.

- It can lead to breathing problems, paralysis, heart failure, and even death.

**TETANUS (Lockjaw)** causes painful tightening of the muscles, usually all over the body.

- It can lead to “locking” of the jaw so the victim cannot open his mouth or swallow. Tetanus leads to death in up to 2 out of 10 cases.

**PERTUSSIS (Whooping Cough)** causes coughing spells so bad that it is hard for infants to eat, drink, or breathe. These spells can last for weeks.

- It can lead to pneumonia, seizures (jerking and staring spells), brain damage, and death.

**Diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis vaccine (DTaP) can help prevent these diseases.** Most children who are vaccinated with DTaP will be protected throughout childhood. Many more children would get these diseases if we stopped vaccinating.

DTaP is a safer version of an older vaccine called DTP. DTP is no longer used in the United States.

### 2 Who should get DTaP vaccine and when?

**Children** should get 5 doses of DTaP vaccine, one dose at each of the following ages:

- ✓ 2 months
- ✓ 4 months
- ✓ 6 months
- ✓ 15-18 months
- ✓ 4-6 years

DTaP may be given at the same time as other vaccines.

### 3 Some children should not get DTaP vaccine or should wait

- Children with minor illnesses, such as a cold, may be vaccinated. But children who are moderately or severely ill should usually wait until they recover before getting DTaP vaccine.
- Any child who had a life-threatening allergic reaction after a dose of DTaP should not get another dose.
- Any child who suffered a brain or nervous system disease within 7 days after a dose of DTaP should not get another dose.
- Talk with your doctor if your child:
  - had a seizure or collapsed after a dose of DTaP,
  - cried non-stop for 3 hours or more after a dose of DTaP,
  - had a fever over 105°F after a dose of DTaP.

Ask your health care provider for more information. Some of these children should not get another dose of pertussis vaccine, but may get a vaccine without pertussis, called **DT**.

### 4 Older children and adults

DTaP is not licensed for adolescents, adults, or children 7 years of age and older.

But older people still need protection. A vaccine called **Tdap** is similar to DTaP. A single dose of Tdap is recommended for people 11 through 64 years of age. Another vaccine, called **Td**, protects against tetanus and diphtheria, but not pertussis. It is recommended every 10 years. There are separate Vaccine Information Statements for these vaccines.