

Tdap: Frequently Asked Questions

Starting in school year 2008-2009, all Oregon 7th graders are required to have one dose of Tdap vaccine, if it's been at least five years since receiving their last Tetanus containing vaccine. A medical or religious exemption is acceptable.

What is Tdap?

Tdap is a vaccine that was licensed for use in 2005. It is given to adolescents and adults who are 10-64 years of age. It helps boost protection against three diseases: Tetanus, Diphtheria, and Pertussis (whooping cough).

What are Tetanus, Diphtheria, and Pertussis?

- Tetanus is a disease that is caused by bacteria found in soil or manure that enters the body through cuts, punctures, or other wounds. Tetanus is also called lockjaw because it causes severe muscle spasms, especially in the jaw, neck, and chest muscles that control breathing.
- Diphtheria is an infection of the mouth, nose and throat that most often affects children under 15 years of age. Ten percent of the victims of this disease die.
- Pertussis is a highly contagious respiratory disease that is also known as whooping cough. Pertussis can cause rib fractures from severe coughing and pneumonia, and can result in hospitalization and death. Infants are most at risk for serious Pertussis disease and death, and adolescents and adults can spread this disease to them. In the last several years, four babies in Oregon have died from Pertussis disease. The most common sources of Pertussis in children are caregivers and loved ones: parents, grandparents, siblings, daycare workers, health professionals, and teachers can carry the disease but don't realize they are passing it on.

My student had a vaccine called DTaP when he was a child. Is this the same as Tdap?

No, DTaP and Tdap protect against the same three diseases, but the vaccines are different. DTaP is given to children younger than 7 years of age, and Tdap is given to adolescents 10 years and older. The Tdap shot is necessary to boost immunity against these three diseases.

My student got a Td booster less than 5 years ago. Does she need Tdap now?

No, but Oregon law will require Tdap when it's been five years since the last Tetanus containing vaccine. However, if your student is ever around babies, including siblings, cousins, or babysitting, talk to your doctor about getting Tdap now. Infants are most at risk for serious Pertussis disease, and adolescents and adults can unknowingly spread this disease to them.

Should students older than 7th grade get Tdap vaccine?

Yes, one dose of Tdap is recommended for all adolescents if they haven't had a Td booster in the past five years. The requirement for Tdap will be phased in one grade level per year through 12th grade in school year 2013-2014.

Should adults get Tdap vaccine?

Yes, adults through 64 years of age should get one dose of Tdap to replace their next Tetanus booster. If you haven't had a Tetanus shot in the last 10 years, or if you're ever around babies, talk to your doctor or pharmacist about getting Tdap now.