

Diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis (dTpa) vaccine

Parent Information Sheet

NSW Health offers the vaccines recommended for adolescents by the National Health and Medical Research Council in a school vaccination program. Signed parental/guardian consent must be provided.

Your next steps

- Carefully read this information sheet.
- If you would like your child to be vaccinated against dTpa, please provide your consent online or request a paper based consent form from your school.
- If you do not wish your child to be vaccinated against diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis, do not provide consent.

Q. How do I provide consent for school vaccination?

To provide online consent you will need:

- your Service NSW log-in details and Medicare card details for you and your child.
- If you or your child do not have a Medicare card, consent can still be provided by requesting a paper-based consent form (available on request from schools).

Parents can withdraw consent at any time before vaccination takes place.

Where consent has been given online, please log-in to the secure NSW Health online consent portal and follow the prompts to withdraw consent.

Where consent has been given on the physical consent form, please write to or call the school to advise the student's name, school grade and those vaccines the withdrawn consent applies to.

Q. What are diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis?

Diphtheria is a contagious and potentially life-threatening bacterial infection that causes severe breathing difficulties, heart failure and nerve damage.

Tetanus is a severe, often fatal disease of the nervous system. The person suffers severe painful muscle spasms,

convulsions and lockjaw. Complications include pneumonia, broken bones (from the muscle spasms), respiratory failure and cardiac arrest.

Pertussis (Whooping Cough) is a highly infectious bacterial disease that can cause bouts of coughing. Adolescents and adults can have an annoying cough for up to 3 months. Severe bouts of coughing can cause vomiting, rib fractures, rupture of small blood vessels and hernias. Complications in infants include pneumonia, seizures and brain damage (hypoxic encephalopathy).

Q. How are diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough spread?

Diphtheria bacteria can live in the mouth, nose, throat or skin on infected individuals. People can get diphtheria by breathing in the bacteria after an infected person has coughed or sneezed. People can also get diphtheria from close contact with discharges from an infected person's mouth, nose, throat or skin.

Tetanus is caused by bacteria found in soil and infection may occur after major injuries or minor injuries (sometimes unnoticed punctures to the skin that are contaminated with soil, dust or manure).

Whooping cough is spread to other people by droplets from coughing or sneezing. Untreated, a person with whooping cough can spread it to other people for up to 3 weeks after the onset of cough.

Q. How do vaccines work?

Vaccines work by triggering the immune system to fight certain infections. If a vaccinated person comes into contact with these infections, their immune system is able to respond more effectively, preventing the disease developing or greatly reducing its severity.

Q. How effective is the vaccine?

The vaccine is very effective in preventing diphtheria and tetanus and about 80% effective in preventing whooping cough.

Q. How many doses of vaccine does my child need to be protected?

One dose of dTpa vaccine is needed to provide protection against diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough into early adulthood.

Q. Who should be vaccinated?

All adolescents should receive 1 dose of dTpa vaccine to provide protection against diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough. This booster vaccine is essential for maintaining immunity into adulthood after the previous diphtheria-tetanus-whooping cough vaccines given in childhood. Students who have received a diphtheria-tetanus vaccine (ADT) in the past can receive the dTpa vaccine to also protect them against whooping cough.

Q. Who should not be vaccinated?

dTpa vaccine should not be given to people who:

- have had anaphylaxis following a previous dose of vaccine
- have had anaphylaxis following any of the vaccine additives (listed over the page)

Q. What if I prefer to wait until my child is older?

The dTpa vaccine can only be provided at school by you returning the signed consent form while your child is in an Intensive English Centre or in Year 7. If you choose to wait until your child is older you will need to make arrangements with your GP.

Q. How safe are vaccines?

Vaccines used in Australia are safe and must pass strict safety testing before being approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA). In addition, the TGA monitors the safety of vaccines once they are in use.

Q. What additives does the vaccine contain?

The vaccine contains aluminium hydroxide and phosphate, traces of formaldehyde, polysorbate 80 and glycline and was exposed to bovine-derived materials during manufacture.

Q. What are the side effects of vaccination?

Side effects are commonly mild and usually involve redness, pain and swelling at the injection site or fever. Serious side effects are extremely rare. More information about side effects is available in the Consumer Medical Information (CMI) for the vaccine available from www.health.nsw.gov.au/schoolvaccination. Parents concerned about side effects after vaccination should contact their GP who should also make a report to the local public health unit.

Q. What is anaphylaxis?

Anaphylaxis is a severe allergic reaction that may result in unconsciousness and death if not treated quickly. It occurs very rarely after any vaccination. The school immunisation nurses are fully trained in the treatment of anaphylaxis.

Q. What if my child had a severe reaction to the old Triple Antigen or DTP vaccine as a baby?

Unless your child had an immediate severe allergic or anaphylactic reaction to the previous vaccine, it is safe for your child to receive the dTpa vaccine.

Q. What if my child has asthma and takes cortisone or prednisone by a “puffer”?

dTpa vaccine can be safely administered to someone who has asthma regardless of which medications they are taking.

Q. Who can consent to vaccination and can consent be withdrawn?

Only parents/guardians can consent to vaccination for students less than 18 years of age. Students aged 18 years and over may consent to their own vaccination and should complete and sign the Consent Form where ‘Parent/Guardian’ is indicated. Consent can be withdrawn at any time by providing the school with written notification of the withdrawal of consent or telephoning the school to withdraw consent.

Q. Should the vaccine be given to a female student who is or thinks she may be pregnant?

No. Any female student who is, or thinks she may be, pregnant should not be vaccinated. On the day of the clinic the vaccination nurse will ask female students if they are or could be pregnant. If a student answers yes to this question, she will not be vaccinated. The student will be urged to immediately discuss the issue with her parent/ guardian and to seek medical help. She will also be provided with contact details for a health referral service that will provide advice, support and guidance.

Q. What can I do if my child missed out on the vaccine because of illness or absence on the day of the nurses’ visit?

If HPV vaccination has been missed at school, catch-up should occur as soon as possible. Some schools will host catch-up clinics, otherwise parents should contact their local GP or pharmacist to arrange vaccination.

Q. How can I access a record of the vaccinations?

Information about your child’s vaccinations will be uploaded to the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) so it can be linked to your child’s existing immunisation history.

Parents can request a copy of their child's AIR Immunisation History Statement at any time up to their child being 14 years of age, and students aged 14 years and over can request their own immunisation history statement, as follows:

- using the Medicare online account through myGov my.gov.au/
- using the Medicare Express Plus App- www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/subjects/express-plus-mobile-apps
- calling the AIR General Enquiries Line on **1800 653 809**

Q. What will happen to my child's information?

The information you provide on the Consent Form is subject to strict confidentiality and privacy protections contained in NSW and Commonwealth legislation (see the enclosed Privacy Statement). The information will be entered into a NSW Health immunisation register and then uploaded to the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) so it can be linked to your child's existing immunisation history and viewed on MyGov.

Q. Where can I find more information about school vaccination?

More information is available:

- by visiting the NSW Health website at www.health.nsw.gov.au/schoolvaccination
- by contacting your local public health unit on **1300 066 055**