



## TETANUS

### WHAT IS TETANUS?

TETANUS, COMMONLY CALLED LOCKJAW, IS A BACTERIAL DISEASE CAUSED BY THE BACTERIUM *Clostridium tetani*, WHICH AFFECTS THE NERVOUS SYSTEM.

### WHO GETS TETANUS?

TETANUS OCCURS MORE OFTEN IN OLDER PEOPLE AND IN AGRICULTURAL WORKERS WHO COME IN CONTACT WITH ANIMAL MANURE.

### HOW IS TETANUS SPREAD?

THE TETANUS GERM IS FOUND IN THE ENVIRONMENT IN SOIL CONTAMINATED WITH MANURE. A PERSON GETS TETANUS WHEN A WOUND BECOMES INFECTED WITH THE BACTERIA. IT IS NOT SPREAD FROM PERSON TO PERSON.

### WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF TETANUS?

A FIRST SIGN OF TETANUS IS MUSCLE STIFFNESS IN THE JAW, FOLLOWED BY STIFFNESS OF THE NECK, DIFFICULTY IN SWALLOWING, STOMACH MUSCLES SPASMS, SWEATING AND FEVER.

### HOW SOON AFTER INFECTION DO SYMPTOMS OCCUR?

SYMPTOMS APPEAR EIGHT DAYS AFTER INFECTION AND THE TIME CAN DEPEND ON THE AMOUNT OF BACTERIA IN THE WOUND.

### DOES PAST INFECTION WITH TETANUS MAKE A PERSON IMMUNE?

ONCE TREATED, A PERSON CAN BE RE-INFECTED WITH TETANUS.

### WHAT IS THE TREATMENT FOR TETANUS?

WOUNDS SHOULD BE THOROUGHLY CLEANED, AND DEAD TISSUE REMOVED. MEDICATION IS GIVEN IF THE PERSON HAS NOT BEEN IMMUNIZED WITH A SERIES OF AT LEAST THREE DOSES OF THE VACCINE.

### WHAT ARE THE COMPLICATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH TETANUS?

COMPLICATIONS INCLUDE SPASM OF THE RESPIRATORY MUSCLES, FRACTURES OF THE SPINE OR LONG BONES, HYPERTENSION, ABNORMAL HEARTBEATS, COMA, GENERALIZED INFECTION, CLOTTING IN THE BLOOD VESSELS OF THE LUNG, PNEUMONIA AND DEATH.

### WHAT CAN BE DONE TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF TETANUS?

AN EFFECTIVE VACCINE CALLED TETANUS TOXOID HAS BEEN AVAILABLE FOR MANY YEARS. TETANUS TOXOID IN COMBINATION WITH DIPHTHERIA TOXOID AND PERTUSSIS VACCINE (DTAP) IS GIVEN TO PREVENT THE DISEASE. A TETANUS BOOSTER SHOT SHOULD BE GIVEN EVERY 10 YEARS.