

## Tetanus

---

### What is Tetanus?

Tetanus is a disease caused by the bacteria *Clostridium tetani* that are usually found in soil, dust and manure. Tetanus is uncommon in the United States due to vaccinations.

### Signs and Symptoms

Symptoms usually appear 3-21 days after exposure, normally around 10-14 days. Symptoms include:

- Jaw cramping
- Sudden muscle tightening, often in the stomach
- Painful muscle stiffness all over the body
- Trouble swallowing
- Seizures
- Headache
- Fever and sweating

Other serious complications include:

- Uncontrolled tightening of the vocal cords
- Broken bones
- Infections
- Difficulty breathing and pneumonia

### Transmission (How it spreads)

Tetanus is not spread person-to-person

Through broken skin injuries from contaminated objects.

- Wounds contaminated with dirt, poop or spit
- Wounds caused by an object puncturing the skin, like a nail or needles
- Burns
- Crush injuries

### Diagnosis and Treatment

Diagnosis via examination and signs and symptoms

Treatment includes:

- Hospitalization and aggressive wound care
- Vaccination
- Antibiotics
- Treatment with human tetanus immune globin (TIG)

### Prevention:

Vaccination is the best way to prevent tetanus Vaccines are available to all ages:

- DTap: young children, at different intervals:
  - 2,4 and 6 months old
  - 15-18 months old
  - 4-6 years old
- Tdap: preteens, ages 11-12
- Td: adults, every 10 years

If you have symptoms, call your healthcare provider

Report cases to the Riley County Health Department by calling the Disease Investigation Line:  
785-317-0474