

# DTaP (Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis) Vaccine: *What You Need to Know*

Many Vaccine Information Statements are available in Spanish and other languages. See [www.immunize.org/vis](http://www.immunize.org/vis)

Hojas de información sobre vacunas están disponibles en español y en muchos otros idiomas. Visite [www.immunize.org/vis](http://www.immunize.org/vis)

## 1 Why get vaccinated?

DTaP vaccine can help protect your child from diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis.

- **DIPHTHERIA (D)** can cause breathing problems, paralysis, and heart failure. Before vaccines, diphtheria killed tens of thousands of children every year in the United States.
- **TETANUS (T)** causes painful tightening of the muscles. It can cause “locking” of the jaw so you cannot open your mouth or swallow. About 1 person out of 5 who get tetanus dies.
- **PERTUSSIS (aP)**, also known as Whooping Cough, causes coughing spells so bad that it is hard for infants and children to eat, drink, or breathe. It can cause pneumonia, seizures, brain damage, or death.

Most children who are vaccinated with DTaP will be protected throughout childhood. Many more children would get these diseases if we stopped vaccinating.

## 2 DTaP vaccine

Children should usually 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. Also, sometimes a child can receive DTaP together with one or more other vaccines in a single shot.

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

DTaP is only for children younger than 7 years old. DTaP vaccine is not appropriate for everyone—a small number of children should receive a different vaccine that contains only diphtheria and tetanus instead of DTaP.

Tell your health care provider if your child:

- Has had an **allergic reaction after a previous dose of DTaP**, or has any **severe, life-threatening allergies**.
- Has had a **coma or long repeated seizures within 7 days after a dose of DTaP**.
- Has **seizures or another nervous system problem**.
- Has had a condition called **Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS)**.
- Has had **severe pain or swelling after a previous dose of DTaP or DT vaccine**.

In some cases, your health care provider may decide to postpone your child’s DTaP vaccination to a future visit.

Children with minor illnesses, such as a cold, may be vaccinated. Children who are moderately or severely ill should usually wait until they recover before getting DTaP vaccine.

Your health care provider can give you more information.



## 4 Risks of a vaccine reaction

- Redness, soreness, swelling, and tenderness where the shot is given are common after DTaP.
- Fever, fussiness, tiredness, poor appetite, and vomiting sometimes happen 1 to 3 days after DTaP vaccination.
- More serious reactions, such as seizures, non-stop crying for 3 hours or more, or high fever (over 105°F) after DTaP vaccination happen much less often. Rarely, the vaccine is followed by swelling of the entire arm or leg, especially in older children when they receive their fourth or fifth dose.
- Long-term seizures, coma, lowered consciousness, or permanent brain damage happen extremely rarely after DTaP vaccination.

As with any medicine, there is a very remote chance of a vaccine causing a severe allergic reaction, other serious injury, or death.

## 5 What if there is a serious problem?

An allergic reaction could occur after the child leaves the clinic. If you see signs of a severe allergic reaction (hives, swelling of the face and throat, difficulty breathing, a fast heartbeat, dizziness, or weakness), call 9-1-1 and get the child to the nearest hospital.

For other signs that concern you, call your child's health care provider.

Serious reactions should be reported to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS). Your doctor will usually file this report, or you can do it yourself. Visit [www.vaers.hhs.gov](http://www.vaers.hhs.gov) or call 1-800-822-7967. *VAERS is only for reporting reactions, it does not give medical advice.*

## 6 The National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program

The National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program (VICP) is a federal program that was created to compensate people who may have been injured by certain vaccines. Visit [www.hrsa.gov/vaccinecompensation](http://www.hrsa.gov/vaccinecompensation) or call 1-800-338-2382 to learn about the program and about filing a claim. There is a time limit to file a claim for compensation.

## 7 How can I learn more?

- Ask your healthcare provider.
- Call your local or state health department.
- Contact the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):
  - Call 1-800-232-4636 (1-800-CDC-INFO) or
  - Visit [www.cdc.gov/vaccines](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines)

Vaccine Information Statement (Interim)  
DTaP (Diphtheria, Tetanus,  
Pertussis) Vaccine



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