

Tetanus

Agent: Toxin secreted by the bacteria *Clostridium tetani*

Mode of Transmission: Usually transmitted when a wound is infected by contaminated soil, dust, or animal or human feces.

Signs/Symptoms: A descending pattern of painful muscle contractions, particularly of the neck muscles, difficulty swallowing, and abdominal rigidity.

Prevention: Tetanus vaccine is available as part of the diphtheria/tetanus/pertussis (DTaP) vaccine for children and as a new combination tetanus/diphtheria/pertussis (Tdap) vaccine for adolescents and adults. One dose of Tdap should be given at 11 to 12 years of age with booster doses of tetanus/diphtheria (Td) every ten years.

Other Important Information: The case-fatality rate of tetanus ranges from 10% to 80% and depends on the length of incubation and the recognition of symptoms as indicative of tetanus.

No cases of tetanus were reported in Virginia in 2008. Single cases were reported in 2005 and in 2004. Prior to 2004, the last reported case of tetanus in Virginia occurred in 1998.