

## **Tetanus**

Agent: Toxin secreted by the bacteria *Clostridium tetani*

Mode of Transmission: The bacteria enter the body through a break in the skin, usually when a wound, either major or minor, is infected by contaminated soil, dust, or animal or human feces. Person-to-person transmission does not occur.

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 the 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 thereafter.

Other Important Information: In recent years, a higher proportion of patients with tetanus had minor wounds, probably because severe wounds are more likely to be properly managed. The case-fatality rate of tetanus ranges from 10% to over 80%, and depends on patient age, length of incubation period, and quality of and access to care, especially access to intensive care unit resources and tetanus immune globulin. Attempts at laboratory confirmation may not be helpful because the organism is rarely recovered from the site of infection, and there is usually no detectable antibody response.

In 2012, one case of tetanus was reported in a female in the 20-29 year age group from the eastern region. Prior to this, the last cases were reported in 2004 and 2005, with one case occurring in each of those years.