Tetanus Prevention
(Use of Tetanus Toxoid)

ABOUT THE DISEASE

Tetanus (*lockjaw*) is a serious disease. Tetanus is caused by a germ that lives in the soil. It enters the body through a cut or wound, often caused by a nail or broken piece of glass. You cannot catch tetanus from another person. Tetanus causes serious, painful spasms of all muscles. It can lead to:

- "Locking" of the muscles of the jaw and throat, so the patient cannot open his or her mouth or swallow.
- Damage to the heart muscle.

Immunization against tetanus is recommended for all infants 6 to 8 weeks of age and older, all children, and all adults. Immunization against tetanus first consists of a series of 3 or 4 injections, depending on which type of tetanus toxoid you receive. In addition, it is very important that you get a booster injection every 10 years for the rest of your life. Also, if you get a wound that is unclean or hard to clean, you may need an emergency booster injection, if it has been more than 5 years since your last booster. A tetanus infection in the past does not make you immune to tetanus in the future.

Your recent injury or condition requires protection against the infection of tetanus. If you have not been immunized previously, you will receive:

- Tetanus Immune Globulin (a single injection).
- Tetanus Toxoid (this is usually combined with Diphtheria Toxoid and is the first in a series of three injections).

If you have been immunized against tetanus previously, you will be given a single booster shot today to prevent tetanus infection. You will be protected from tetanus for at least 10 years. Remember this date. You should get a booster shot every 10 years. Knowing the date will prevent you from getting an unnecessary tetanus shot in the future.

If you receive a wound that is deep or contaminated with dirt, or an animal bite, you may be given a booster shot if it has been more than 5 years.

WHAT IS TETANUS TOXOID?

Tetanus toxoid is an inactivated product or toxin of the germ that causes tetanus. Unlike the real germ, tetanus toxoid will not harm you, but it still causes your body to produce antibodies that fight a tetanus infection. Tetanus toxoid is made by growing the bacteria in a liquid medium, and then purifying and inactivating the toxin. Because it is not a live vaccine, the immunity you gain from it tends to decrease over time, which is why booster doses are recommended. The tetanus toxoid cannot cause tetanus.

SIDE EFFECTS

Most people never experience side effects from this vaccine. However, your booster shot may cause some local swelling, pain, redness, and tenderness in your arm around where you received the shot. This is normal. It does not mean that you are allergic to tetanus shots. To reduce your pain, you should rest your arm, apply ice packs, and take mild pain medicine.

If you have a history of any reaction to vaccines, Guillain-Barre syndrome (GBS), any blood clotting problems, are pregnant, or are receiving anticoagulant or blood thinning drugs, tell your caregiver before receiving tetanus toxoid.

WHAT TO DO IF THERE IS A SERIOUS REACTION:

- Call a caregiver or get the person to a doctor or emergency room right away.
- Write down what happened, the date and time it happened, and tell your caregiver.

- Ask your caregiver to file a Vaccine Adverse Event Report form or call, toll-free: (800) 822-7967

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