Tetanus And Diphtheria Prevention

You were given a shot today to prevent tetanus (*lockjaw*) infection. Your booster shot included both tetanus and diphtheria toxoid. You will be protected from both of these infections for at least 5 years.

These vaccines can be used in 3 ways:

- As catch-up for people who did not get all their doses when they were children.
- As a booster dose every 10 years.
- For protection against tetanus infection, after a wound.

Td is generally given to people 7 years of age and older. If you have not received at least 3 doses (DTP or DT) or immunizations during your childhood, you may not be adequately immunized. Immune globulin is then sometimes given.

If you have been adequately immunized previously, and you have a “dirty” wound, generally, you should receive a tetanus booster if you have not had one in the last 5 years.

If you have a “clean” wound, you should receive a tetanus booster if you have not had one within the last 10 years.

It is important to tell your caregiver if you or the person getting the shot:

- Have ever had an allergic reaction or other problem after receiving a Td, DPT or DT shot.
- Are sick or have a bad illness.
- Are pregnant.

You may not know today whether your immunizations are current. The vaccine given today is to protect you from your next cut or injury. It does not offer protection for the current injury. An immune globulin injection may be given, if protection is needed immediately. Check with your caregiver later regarding your immunization status.

Record the date of your booster shot. Knowing the date will prevent you from getting an unnecessary tetanus and diphtheria shot in the future, since the booster shot is generally considered adequate protection for up to 10 years. (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 since your last one.)

The shots you received today may cause some swelling, pain, redness, and tenderness in your arm. This is normal. It does not mean that you are allergic to tetanus and diphtheria shots. To reduce your pain, you should rest your arm, apply ice packs, and take mild pain medicine.

If you experience a serious reaction, involving swelling of your skin, throat, mouth, or face, a rash appears or you have trouble breathing, call a caregiver or get the person to an emergency room right away.

Document Released: 01/25/2006 Document Re-Released: 12/06/2010
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