

# Tetanus

## Fact Sheet

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Tetanus is commonly known as lockjaw. It is a disease caused by *Clostridium tetani* bacteria.

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## Spread



The bacteria live in the environment, including soil, dust, and manure. Bacteria can get into a person's body through broken skin. Wounds in contact with dirt, stool, saliva, and puncture wounds are more likely to get infected. Tetanus can occur in newborns if the mother is not immune and the umbilical cord is cut with a dirty instrument.

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## Signs and Symptoms



Jaw Muscle Spasms



Sudden Fever and Sweating



Headache



Muscle and Joint Pain

Other symptoms include painful muscle stiffness, trouble swallowing, and seizures. Symptoms usually start three days to three weeks after exposure, with an average of eight days.

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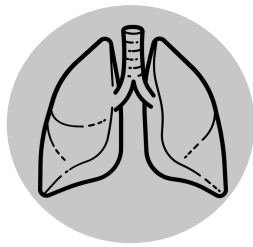
Talk to your healthcare provider if you think you have tetanus. Tetanus is diagnosed based on signs and symptoms. There is no test to confirm tetanus.

People with tetanus should be treated as quickly as possible.

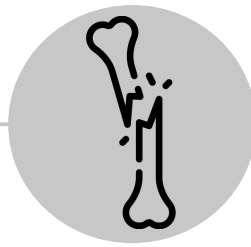
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# Complications

Complications can include:



Pneumonia & Blood  
Clots in the Lungs



Broken Bones



High Blood Pressure  
Or Fast Heart Rate

Other complications include spasms of the vocal cords and/or the muscles you use to breathe. This makes breathing harder to do. About ten to twenty percent of people with this disease will die.

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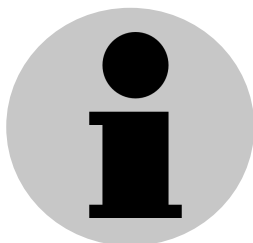
## Prevention



- Vaccination is the best way to prevent tetanus. CDC recommends that children and adults get routine doses of tetanus vaccine. Adults should get a booster dose every ten years.
- You can get tetanus more than once, so it is important to get the vaccine even if you already had tetanus.
- All wounds should be cleaned well. See your healthcare provider for wound care.

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## For More Information, Visit:



1. [www.maine.gov/dhhs/tetanus](http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/tetanus)

2. [www.cdc.gov/tetanus](http://www.cdc.gov/tetanus)

You can also call Maine CDC at 1-800-821-5821.