

Whooping Cough (dTpa)

Protect yourself and those around you

This document provides information about the combined diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis (whooping cough) (dTpa) vaccine, covering:

- the nature of these serious diseases
- effectiveness and safety of the vaccine
- recommended groups for vaccination.

The information aims to ensure you are well-informed about the benefits and potential side effects of vaccination.

About diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis

The dTpa vaccine includes protection against whooping cough, along with diphtheria and tetanus.

Whooping cough, also known as pertussis, is a highly contagious respiratory disease that can cause severe coughing fits. It's particularly dangerous for infants and young children.

Diphtheria is a serious bacterial infection affecting the mucous membranes of the throat and nose.

Due to high vaccination rates in developed countries, diphtheria is rare, however for travellers to SE Asia, Africa, South America and other locations, vaccination is recommended.

Tetanus is a serious bacterial infection that enters the body through broken skin, causing painful muscle stiffness and spasms. Infection can be life-threatening and often affects the neck and jaw muscles, known colloquially as 'lockjaw.'

About the vaccine

Vaccines activate the immune system to combat specific infections. When a vaccinated individual encounters these infections, their immune system responds more efficiently, either preventing the disease or significantly reducing its severity.

Effectiveness

The dTpa vaccine is highly effective in preventing diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough, although its effectiveness diminishes over time.

Who should get vaccinated?

- Infants, children, and adolescents as part of the National Immunisation Program schedule.
- Adults travelling overseas who haven't received a booster in the past 10 years.
- Adults in certain risk groups or those in contact with such groups, every 10 years, including:
 - Pregnant or breastfeeding women
 - Early childhood educators and carers
 - Healthcare workers
 - Individuals in close contact with infants.

Safety

Vaccines administered in Australia are safe and undergo rigorous efficacy and safety testing before being approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA). Additionally, the TGA continuously monitors vaccine safety once they are in use.

Common side effects are typically mild, such as redness, pain, and swelling at the injection site, or fever. Serious side effects are rare.