



TETANUS (LOCKJAW) FACT SHEET

WHAT IS TETANUS?

Tetanus is caused by bacteria. Spores of tetanus bacteria are found in the environment, including soil, dust, and manure.

HOW DO YOU GET TETANUS?

Infection can occur when the bacteria enter the body through breaks in the skin — usually cuts or puncture wounds caused by contaminated objects. Tetanus does not spread from person to person.

SYMPTOMS

Symptoms typically appear between 3 and 21 days after exposure and may include:

- Jaw cramping
- Muscle spasms
- Painful muscle stiffness
- Trouble swallowing
- Seizures
- Headache
- Fever
- Sweating
- Changes in blood pressure

TREATMENT

Tetanus is a medical emergency requiring care in the hospital, treatment with human tetanus immune globulin (TIG), wound care, drugs to control muscle spasms, antibiotics, and tetanus vaccination. Discuss treatment options with your doctor.

PREVENTION

- The best way to prevent Tetanus is by being up to date with your tetanus vaccine.
- Immediate and good wound care can also help prevent infection.

DGHD EFFORTS

The Delaware General Health District (DGHD) offers the Tetanus vaccine. Please call (740) 203-2040 to schedule an appointment.

Reports of suspected and confirmed cases of disease are made to the DGHD. The DGHD investigates potential sources of illness, conducts surveillance for the spread of disease, and engages in community outreach and education.