

## News Release

### For Immediate Release

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### Tetanus 101

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) encourages residents to know when they received their last tetanus shot. Tetanus (lock jaw) is an often-fatal disease according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Tetanus bacteria are found everywhere including dust, dirt or soil, and manure. After the invention of the tetanus vaccine in the 1920's, the number of tetanus infections in the United States has gone down 99%.

Tetanus disease is not spread person to person like most other vaccine-preventable diseases. Instead, the bacteria enter the body through a wound such as a puncture from a nail or barbed wire or may also enter the body through burns or other injuries. Symptoms of tetanus include jaw cramps, painful stiff muscles all over the body, trouble swallowing, seizures, headache, fever, changes in blood pressure and heart rate, and sudden involuntary muscle spasms.

Being up to date on your tetanus vaccination is the best way to prevent tetanus. Children get tetanus vaccine as part of their regular childhood immunizations from 6 months to 6 years of age. Preteens get a booster dose at 11 or 12 years, usually right before starting 7<sup>th</sup> grade. Adults should receive a tetanus booster shot every ten years. If you do not know when your last tetanus shot was, your provider may recommend you get a Tdap shot which contains protection against tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis (whooping cough).

If you get an injury such as a cut, scrape, or puncture wound, wash your hands with soap and water before touching the wound. Clean the wound well with soap and water or a first aid wash. Contact your healthcare provider for further treatment, especially for deep wounds or if you have concerns about your wound. Your provider may recommend a tetanus booster if it has been more than 5 years since your last tetanus shot.

If you are unsure about whether you or your child are up to date on your tetanus vaccines, talk to your healthcare provider or contact a public health nurse at SWNPHD. You can also look up your shot records in the Nebraska State Immunization Information System (NESIIS) at [nesiis-dhhs-prod.ne.gov](https://nesiis-dhhs-prod.ne.gov).

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. You can follow us on Facebook and Instagram or view the website at [www.swhealth.ne.gov](http://www.swhealth.ne.gov). Call (308) 345-4223, one number three locations, McCook, Imperial, and Ogallala.

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