

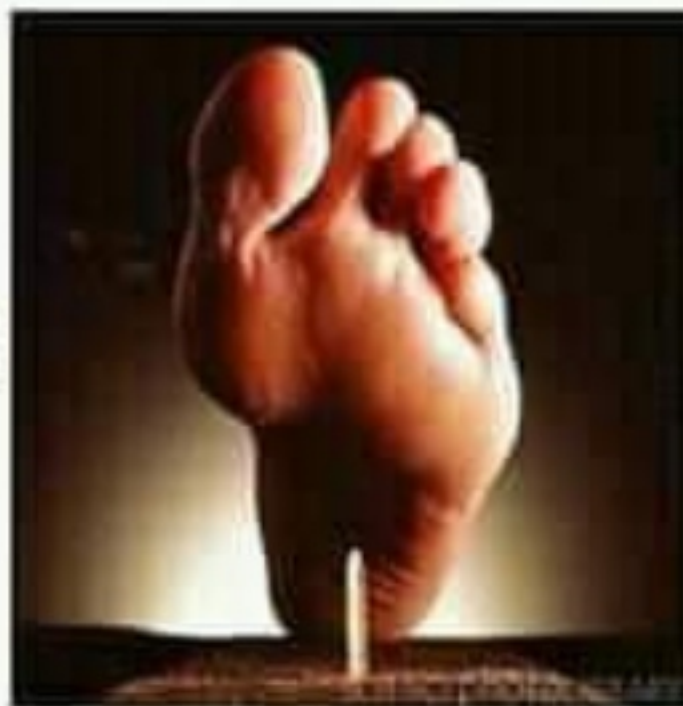
What is Tetanus?

Basically, Tetanus is a potentially fatal disease caused by infection with the tetanus bacterium *Clostridium tetani*.



Rust?

Tetanus is often associated with rust, especially rusty nails, but this concept is a bit misleading.



Rust?

- The rough surface of rusty metal merely provides a good area for the tetanus bacteria to reside
- The nail simply allows a way to puncture skin and deliver the tetanus bacteria into the wound.



How is it spread?

- Usually occurs after an incubation period of 3 to 21 days.
- May occur through unnoticed punctures to the skin that are contaminated with soil, dust or manure)

How is it spread?

- Through major injuries such as open fractures, dirty or deep penetrating wounds, and burns.
- Tetanus is not passed on from one person to another.

How is it prevented?



- Tetanus vaccine is given at 2, 4 and 6 months of age, with boosting doses at 4 years, between 15 to 17 years, and at 50 years of age.
- Adults who haven't had a booster in the last ten years should get one when they turn 50.

How is it prevented?

Open fractures, deep penetrating wounds, contaminated wounds or burns

- disinfect the wound and seek medical attention
- receive a boosting dose of tetanus vaccine if more than 5 years have elapsed since their last dose.

Signs and Symptoms



- Stiffness of the jaw (lockjaw, often the first sign)
- Difficulty swallowing
- A stiff neck
- Irritability and headaches
- Chills and fever
- Generalised stiffness
- Spasms – local or general

Immunisation

Tetanus immunisation lasts for many years if the childhood/adolescent schedule of vaccination is adhered to.



Immunisation

Standard practice in many places is to give the booster to any patient with a puncture wound who is uncertain of when he or she was last vaccinated.



Tetanus-prone wounds

Types of wounds likely to favour the growth of tetanus organisms include:

- wounds with extensive tissue damage (e.g. contusion or burn)
- any superficial wound obviously contaminated with soil



Tetanus-prone wounds

Types of wounds likely to favour the growth of tetanus organisms include:

- dust or horse manure (especially if disinfection is delayed more than four hours).

