Tetanus Encyclopedia Article

Tetanus

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Tetanus

A serious disease characterized by painful spasms of all muscles.

Tetanus is caused by bacteria that are present everywhere in the environment and enter the body through a cut or open wound. It causes serious, painful spasms of all muscles in the body. Tetanus takes its nickname, lockjaw, from its most serious and advanced symptom—immobilization of the jaw, preventing the infected person from opening his or her mouth and from swallowing.

A vaccine to protect against tetanus is routinely administered during childhood in three doses, with the first dose at around four months of age. *(See* **Immunization.)** Further immunization against tetanus is needed, administered at ten-year intervals, through adulthood.

For Further Study

Organizations

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