

Tetanus Risk and First Aid After a Fire

After a fire, there is risk of injury as cleanup efforts begin. Tetanus is a concern for persons with both open and closed wounds, and a tetanus vaccination is recommended for all residents returning to the burn area who have not had a documented dose within the past ten years. Prompt first aid management for wounds and prevention of infection is another important consideration.

If you receive a puncture wound or a wound contaminated with feces, soil, or saliva, a health care professional should determine if a tetanus booster is necessary, based on individual records.

Tetanus Prevention

- Patients without a clear history of receiving at least three tetanus vaccinations and who have any wound should get the tetanus immune globulin (TIG) as well as the tetanus vaccination.
- Tetanus in the United States is most commonly reported in people older than 40 because they are less likely to be adequately vaccinated.
- Women over 55 years of age are especially susceptible because they likely do not have protective levels of tetanus antibody.
- Diabetics are at increased risk for tetanus. Reported tetanus is about three times more common in diabetics, and fatalities are about four times more common.

Vaccination History	Clean, minor wounds	All other wounds
Unknown or less than 3 doses	Td or Tdap	Td or Tdap PLUS tetanus immune globulin (TIG)
3 or more doses and ≤ 5 years since last dose		
3 or more doses and 6-10 years since last dose		Td or Tdap
3 or more doses and >10 years since last dose	Td or Tdap	Td or Tdap

www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/00041645.htm

Wound Care

Seek medical attention as soon as possible if:

- There is a foreign object embedded in the wound.
- The wound is at special risk of infection (such as a dog bite or a puncture by a dirty object).
- A previous wound shows signs of becoming infected (e.g. increased pain, heat, swelling, redness, draining, or fever).

Care for Minor Wounds

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and clean water.
- Avoid touching the wound with your fingers while treating it.
- Remove obstructive jewelry and clothing from the injured area.
- Apply direct pressure to any bleeding wound to control bleeding.
- Clean the wound after bleeding has stopped:
 - Examine wounds for dirt and foreign objects.
 - Gently flood the wound with clean water, then gently clean around the wound with soap and water.
 - Pat the wound dry and apply an adhesive bandage or dry clean cloth.
- Provide pain relievers, if possible.

Other Considerations

- Wounds in contact with soil and sand can become infected.
- Puncture wounds can carry bits of clothing and dirt into wounds and result in infection.
- Crush injuries are more likely to become infected than wounds from cuts.

Contact your health provider or the Health Department (970-498-6700) for information on receiving a tetanus shot.



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