



IMMUNIZATIONS

Extended Trips (36 Hours +) and Tetanus Vaccine Policy

Preventative immunizations as recommended by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), and the Washington State Department of Health are recommended for all participants. Any deviation from those standards presents a health risk to your child. Up to date immunization status for tetanus is required to participate in all activities. Some exceptions to this tetanus policy exist with a signed Immunization Exemption Request waiver for day and overnight trips only.

Note: For extended backpacking trips lasting longer than 36 consecutive hours (summer season only currently), a tetanus booster within the last 5 years **and** a current copy of your child's Immunization Record showing a full primary tetanus vaccine series is required to participate. No exceptions to tetanus policy will be allowed for extended backpacking trips as it would require evacuation of any participant who sustains any skin wound since tetanus spores are present in soil and can occur even with a minor wound in individuals not immunized to tetanus.

For participants planning to register for one of our summer extended backpacking trips, please note a seven (7) month window is needed in order to get the full series of tetanus. Summer trips typically begin late June / early July.

More information about tetanus vaccine:

An easy way to determine how to catch up a child is to consult "Recommended Immunization Schedules for Persons Aged 0 Through 18 Years, U.S." The schedule is approved by CDC, AAP, and AAFP and is released early in each calendar year. It includes a catch-up schedule for youth who have fallen behind. Here is a link to the regular schedule: www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/index.html. This is a link to the catch-up schedule: <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/hcp/index.html>.

Link to WebMD site that says more about the 3-vaccine series in lay terms:
<http://www.webmd.com/vaccines/tetanus-vaccine>

FAQ

Why does Wild Whatcom require a tetanus booster within the past 5 years?

For someone with **no** wounds or injuries, a tetanus vaccine is only given once every 10 years. In a person who sustains a wound, however, whether a physician decides give a tetanus booster at the time of wound treatment depends BOTH on 1) how long since the last booster and 2) **the type of wound**.

For a clean minor wound (clean kitchen knife, just out of the drawer, not yet used on food, causing a cut to a finger) it is sufficient to have had a tetanus vaccine within the last 10 years. *This is not a tetanus prone wound.*

For **any other wound**, especially any wound sustained outdoors and contaminated with dirt, bark, or organic material, or any puncture wound, a tetanus booster is given at the time of wound treatment if it has been 5 years or more since the last booster.

This is the standard of care for wound care in the United States. This [graphic](#) from the Minnesota Department of State explains it nicely:

This underlies the reason for the Wild Whatcom policy. It is presumed that any wound sustained in the backcountry has a high likelihood of NOT being "a clean, minor wound". Adequate local wound care *may* be able to be performed in the backcountry, but a tetanus booster cannot be given. It is recommended that the booster be given as soon as possible (within 48 hours) or sooner the more contaminated the wound. A child without a tetanus booster in the last 5 years would need to be evacuated if they sustained a dirt/bark/organic material-contaminated wound or a puncture wound. Depending on the location at the time of injury, this may force cancellation of the entire trip for all, since it is also Wild Whatcom policy to have two adult mentors with the group (this applies to both the kids not being evacuated and the wounded child being evacuated, which puts both groups in a bind).

Several outdoor exploration organizations, as well as professionals who work in outdoor jobs and settings, have this as a requirement or a recommendation for tetanus vaccine interval.

For the protection of each individual and for the preservation of the trip for all, Wild Whatcom requires all participants going into the backcountry for 36 consecutive hours or more to have had a tetanus booster within 5 years.

Here are some further links on tetanus and vaccination:

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/programs/vfc/downloads/resolutions/1012-1-dtap.pdf>

www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/pinkbook/downloads/tetanus.pdf

What schedule should I use to vaccinate adolescents or adults who never received the primary series of tetanus toxoid-containing vaccine?

Children, ages 7 years and older, and adults who have never received tetanus-containing vaccines, or whose vaccination history is unknown, should receive the 3-dose series. In this situation, ACIP recommends Tdap for dose #1, followed 4 weeks later by Td for dose #2, followed at least 6 months later by Td for dose #3. Tdap can substitute for only one of the 3 Td doses in the series, preferably the first. The amount of protection provided by a single dose of Tdap in a person who has not previously received pertussis vaccine is not known. Following the primary series, booster doses of Td should be given every 10 years thereafter.

Here is another example, with a similar-aged child:

I need to know how to catch-up a child who is 12 years old and received 1 dose of DTaP vaccine at age 2 years and a dose of Tdap at age 11 years.

This child needs to complete the primary series with 1 dose of Td, administered no earlier than 6 months after the Tdap dose given at age 11 years. After that, the child needs a booster dose of Td every 10 years. An easy way to determine how to catch up a child is to consult "Recommended Immunization Schedules for Persons Aged 0 Through 18 Years, U.S." The schedule is approved by CDC, AAP, and AAFP and is released early in each calendar year. It includes a catch-up schedule for children who have fallen behind (see www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/index.html).

Note: the child in the example will have received 3 doses total. You are never caught up, or immune, until you have received at least 3 doses. Just FYI, the reason babies get more than 3 doses, is that their immune systems aren't so smart yet. Adults and older kids only need 3 doses.

A booster is required every 5 years for those participants in our extended backpacking trips lasting longer than 36 consecutive hours as per the CDC and AAP recommendation of a tetanus booster within five years for those on extended wilderness trips. More information is available here:

<http://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/Pubs/348-284-IndividualVaccineRequirements.pdf>

For questions, please contact us: info@wildwhatcom.org or 360.389.3414.