

# TRAVEL TIPS

## Your Bags Are Packed—But Are You *Really* Ready To Go? *Before Your Next Trip, You Should Check Your Tetanus Protection*

(NAPSA)—Who would think a minor wound could ruin a family vacation or an important business trip? Something as simple as a blister from a new pair of shoes, a scrape on your arm when packing the car or a cut caused when changing a tire—any type of open wound—is a risk for tetanus, a severe infection that can sometimes be fatal. But the risk is easily avoided with a routine tetanus booster.

Travel expert and Travel Channel host Tracy Gallagher, on behalf of the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases' (NFID) Power of 10™ campaign, urges travelers to make sure they are up to date on their tetanus booster before packing their bags.

"Anyone who travels can get cuts and scrapes from time to time, the kind that wouldn't send someone to a doctor. But don't drop your guard when it comes to these seemingly simple wounds—the consequences can be serious," says Gallagher.

Tetanus bacteria are common in the environment and can be found in dust and dirt. The bacteria can enter the body through even the tiniest wound, which can lead to an infection and a serious disease.

"When someone gets a tetanus infection, it usually leads to a long hospital stay, use of a machine to assist with breathing and weeks or months of rehabilitation.

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—Tracy Gallagher  
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Thankfully, it's not common in the U.S. since the use of preventive vaccination. But tetanus is still fatal for one out of every 10 people infected," explains NFID Medical Director Susan J. Rehm, MD. "That's why we want to reinforce the importance for everyone in the family to make sure they are up to date with the tetanus booster."

Tetanus protection starts with a series of three vaccinations, usually during infancy, followed by a booster starting at age 11 or 12 and continuing throughout adulthood. While the vast majority of children between the ages of 6 and 11 years are vaccinated against both tetanus and diphtheria, protection fades with time. By age 20, only 47 percent are protected against these diseases. Booster vaccination is required throughout life to guard against infection and its consequences. The tetanus booster has been combined with a vaccine for diphtheria, another potentially fatal disease, traditionally given every 10 years.

### What Is Tetanus?

Symptoms of tetanus can

appear anywhere from three days to three weeks after exposure to the bacteria. It usually starts with stiffness in the neck and trouble swallowing, which is also known as lockjaw. Infection may be accompanied by fever, sweating, elevated blood pressure and rapid heartbeat. The most common form of tetanus causes paralysis and severe muscle spasms. While not contagious, tetanus is a rare disease that can be very difficult to diagnose.

### What Is Diphtheria?

Diphtheria is a highly-contagious disease caused by inhaling bacteria from an infected person. Symptoms begin very much like a common cold, usually two to five days after transmission, but can progress quickly. The infection can lead to heart failure and paralysis, and coma or even death can occur in as little as a week. Diphtheria is still common in 87 countries, with some strains continuing to circulate in parts of the U.S. Travel destinations where diphtheria is found include certain parts of Africa, Europe, Central America, the Caribbean, the former Soviet republics, and Asia.

NFID advises adolescents and adults to take advantage of Td vaccine protection, especially before you take your next trip. More information about tetanus and diphtheria is available at [www.nfid.org](http://www.nfid.org).