

Protecting yourself from tetanus during disaster clean-up



Tetanus is a serious disease caused by bacteria found in soil, dust and manure. It affects the nerves in the brain and spinal cord causing painful muscle spasms.

You can become infected if the bacteria enters your bloodstream through an open cut or wound. Tetanus cannot be transmitted from person to person.

Contact with contaminated floodwater and mud can increase your risk of tetanus.

You can get tetanus through a minor wound but deep puncture wounds or cuts are more likely to cause infection.

Symptoms usually start 10 days after exposure to the bacteria, but it can be longer.

How can I protect myself from tetanus?

The best way to protect yourself from tetanus is through vaccination. First aid to any cuts or wounds is also important.

Vaccination is your best defence against tetanus.

- ✓ People in flood-affected areas should check they are up to date with their tetanus vaccination.
- ✓ If you get a cut or wound while cleaning up in flood-affected areas and it's been more than 5 years since your last tetanus vaccination, you may need a booster.
- ✓ People who have not received a tetanus vaccination, may require further treatment if a tetanus prone wound is sustained. Always seek advice from your healthcare provider prior to helping with disaster clean-up or if you sustain any cuts or wounds.



Management of minor cuts and wounds



Clean the wound using clean, fresh water



Remove debris from wounds using clean or sterile gauze (often contained in first aid kits) if available



Seek medical attention if there is a lot of dirt or debris in the wound, do not scrub the wound



Apply an antiseptic such as an iodine solution if available



Cover the cleaned wound with a waterproof, sterile dressing



Keep cuts or wounds clean and dry

If you or anyone you know has a severe wound, or a wound that becomes red, hot to touch, sore or swollen, seek medical advice from your doctor.

Call **13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84)** at any time.

Contact **13 QGOV (13 74 68)** for your nearest Public Health Unit.