

# Tetanus



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# Disclosures

- None

# Objectives

- At the end of this talk the participants should be able to -
- Understand what is Tetanus and how it is caused.
- Identify the common presenting features of tetanus.
- Recognize the different types of tetanus
- Confirm the diagnosis of tetanus
- Know the principles of management of tetanus
- Become familiar with the strategies for the Prevention of tetanus

# Key Messages

- Tetanus is an acute lethal illness characterized by painful muscle spasms
- It is caused by a neurotoxin produced by spore-forming bacterium *Clostridium tetani*.
- It occurs in non immunized individuals and is common in resource limited countries
- There are Four main types of tetanus-  
Generalized, Neonatal, Localized and Cerebral tetanus
- Characteristic features include tonic spasms - lock jaw, risus sardonicus, opisthotonos
- Others features - irritability, dysphagia, fever, and autonomic effects including tachycardia, dysrhythmias, labile hypertension, diaphoresis
- Complications include - respiratory distress, aspiration pneumonia, rhabdomyolysis, autonomic dysfunction, asphyxia, long bone fractures
- Neonatal tetanus occurs in newborns of unimmunized mothers usually from infection through contaminated umbilical cord.
- It typically manifests within 3-12 days of birth with irritability, progressive difficulty in feeding, facial grimacing, rigidity, and severe spasms triggered by touch.

# Key Messages

- Diagnosis is mainly clinical.
- Management involves
  - neutralization of tetanus toxin,
  - control of spasms,
  - maintenance of respiration,
  - meticulous supportive care and
  - prevention of recurrences.
- Human Tetanus Immune Globulin should be used as soon as possible
- Wound debridement is important
- Metronidazole decreases the number of vegetative forms of *C. tetani* ,
- Muscle relaxants are needed for painful muscle spasms
- Tetanus is entirely preventable through immunization with tetanus-toxoid-containing vaccines.

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