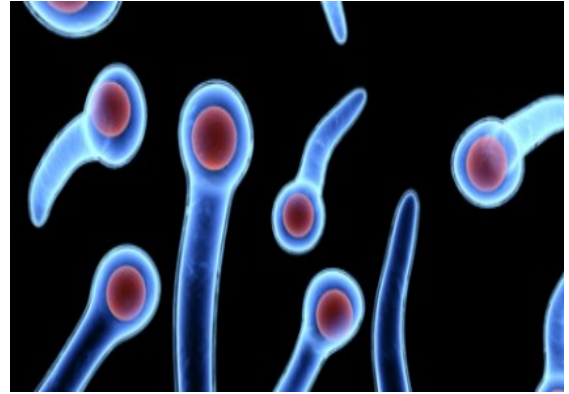


Client Information: **Tetanus and Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision (VMMC)**

This brochure explains how to reduce your risk of tetanus following VMMC.



What is tetanus?

Tetanus is a severe and potentially fatal disease caused by a type of bacteria found in dust, soil and animal dung. Tetanus can enter the body through cuts and sores, including a circumcision wound that is healing.

What can increase the risk of tetanus following VMMC?

- Whether you receive VMMC or not, you are at risk of getting tetanus through any cuts and sores on your body if you have not received a full series of tetanus vaccinations. The most common way to receive the vaccinations is through **three (3)** doses during infancy and **three (3) additional** doses at specific times in early childhood, adolescence, and adulthood.
- Tetanus does not spread from one person to another. Having your family members vaccinated does not protect you from getting tetanus if you are not also vaccinated.
- Following VMMC, you are at higher risk of getting tetanus if you don't take care of your circumcision wound properly. Tetanus bacteria can grow rapidly in a dirty environment, including if you wash yourself using dirty water.
- Applying ointments, home remedies or traditional medicines, such as herbal remedies, ash or animal dung, to any wound, including the circumcision wound, increases your risk of tetanus. Do not put anything on the circumcision wound unless instructed by a trained health care provider.

What should I do to protect myself from tetanus?

- If you are going for VMMC, take your vaccination records with you, if possible, so that the health workers can determine your risk of tetanus. Depending on the circumcision method you choose, health care workers may advise that you need additional vaccinations before getting circumcised by that method.

- On the day of circumcision, before coming to clinic, thoroughly wash the genital area including the scrotum, the penile shaft and under the foreskin to remove dirt and debris. If it is not easy to wash under the foreskin, do not force the foreskin to separate from the penis. Instead, tell the health care worker at the VMMC clinic that you were unable to wash under the foreskin.
- If you have any wound on any part of your body, report it to the health care workers before the circumcision procedure is done so that they can assess it and provide the best care for you. Please also inform the health care worker if you have any health conditions such as a past history of bleeding, bleeding tendencies in your family, past operations, or chronic illness so that they can determine whether you are eligible for a circumcision procedure.
- Make sure that you follow all wound care and genital hygiene instructions from the clinic staff after circumcision. **DO NOT** apply any ointments, home remedies or traditional medicines, such as herbal remedies, ash or animal dung, to the circumcision wound.
- Keep the wound clean and dry at all times (except when washing it as instructed). This includes avoiding activities that can make it wet or dirty. Always wear clean and dry undergarments while the wound is healing to reduce the risk of tetanus.

What are the symptoms of tetanus?

Symptoms can include one or more of the following:

- Jaw cramping or locking, making it difficult to open or close your mouth
- Difficulty swallowing
- Painful muscle stiffness all over the body, particularly in the neck or stomach (abdominals)
- Muscle spasms (sudden unintentional muscle tightening)
- Seizures
- Fever and sweating.

The symptoms may start in one place and then move to the rest of the body.

What should I do if I think I may have been exposed to tetanus?

- Seek urgent medical attention from the nearest health facility if you experience any of the symptoms mentioned above.
- If you are not experiencing symptoms, but believe you might be at risk of tetanus, please contact your VMMC provider.

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