

# Construction micro-organisms: Tetanus from contaminated cuts and wounds

Tetanus usually occurs when a cut / wound is contaminated. This page tells you how to control this risk and why. You also need to be aware of the [general information on micro-organisms](#)<sup>[1]</sup>.

## What you must do

Follow the [Assess, Control and Review model](#)<sup>[2]</sup>. Pay particular attention to the following things:

### Assess

**Identify and assess:** Tetanus is a serious but rare infection caused by bacteria. It usually occurs when cuts etc get contaminated. While the tetanus bacterium is common, effective immunisation means that the risk of infection is rare for British workers. Foreign nationals might be more vulnerable if they have not been vaccinated.

### Control

**Prevent:** Check that your employees have been vaccinated. Arrange for this to be done if they have not been. This is available free from GPs regardless of workplace risk.

**Control:** Where workers are at risk from tetanus control this by:

- **General controls** – follow the [general controls for harmful micro-organisms](#)<sup>[3]</sup>. Pay particular attention to:
  - following good basic hygiene including regular hand-washing
  - covering all cuts, abrasions and other breaks in the skin with waterproof dressings and/or gloves - seek medical advice as soon as possible if you have a deep wound that could get contaminated and you have not been vaccinated - you may need a medication called tetanus immunoglobulin (TIG)

## What you should know

Tetanus is a serious condition caused by infection with the common bacterium *Clostridium tetani*. The bacterium usually enters the body through a wound or cut in the skin. Once inside, it multiplies and releases a neurotoxin that causes the symptoms of tetanus to develop. These symptoms

include muscle spasms and stiffness throughout the body, particularly in the neck, face and jaw (lockjaw).

You can find more information about tetanus on the [NHS website](#) <sup>[4]</sup>.

## Link URLs in this page

1. general information on micro-organisms  
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/healthrisks/hazardous-substances/harmful-micro-organisms.htm>
2. Assess, Control and Review model  
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/healthrisks/managing-essentials/managing-essentials.htm>
3. general controls for harmful micro-organisms  
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/healthrisks/hazardous-substances/harmful-micro-organisms.htm>
4. NHS website  
<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Tetanus/Pages/Introduction.aspx>