

1.9 Tetanus

Summary

Number of cases, 2008: 2

Number of cases, 2007: 1

Two cases of tetanus were notified in 2008. The cases were in the age groups 20-24 years and 65+ years and both were male. Risk factors for infection were reported for both cases; one case had wound injuries from a road traffic accident and one had a wound injury from a fall outdoors. The immunisation status of the case aged ≥ 65 years was unknown while the case aged 20-24 years had no history of tetanus immunisation. Both cases were given a tetanus vaccine at the time of injury; only one of the cases was given tetanus immunoglobulin G (TIG) at the time of injury.

Summary of data since 1981:

Twelve cases of tetanus were reported since tetanus became notifiable in November 1981. The cases ranged in age from 15 to 84 years with a mean age of 53 years and a median age of 61 years (age was unknown for two cases). The number of tetanus cases notified by age group is shown in figure 1. Two deaths were reported in cases aged >60 years.

Of the 12 tetanus cases seven (58%) were male, three (25%) were female while gender was unreported for two (17%).

The following wound injuries (n=8) were reported among the 12 notified cases: wound injuries from a road traffic accident (n=1), wound from a fall outdoors

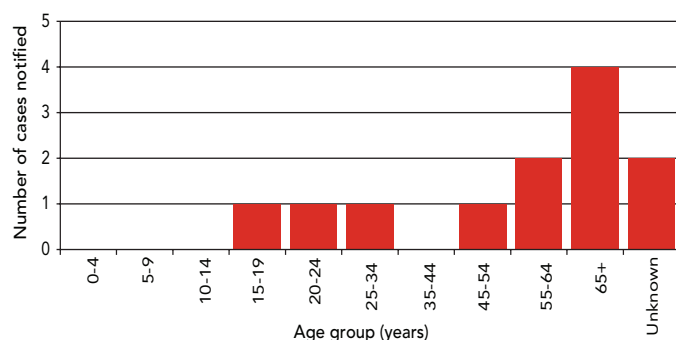


Figure 1. Tetanus cases notified (n=12) from 1982 to 2008 by age group

(n=1), wound associated with a dog bite (n=1), wound from a kitchen knife (n=1), gardening associated leg wound (n=1), leg scratches in an avid gardener (n=1), hand wound associated with a clean piece of wood (n=1) and a farming associated hand wound (n=1).

Vaccination data were reported for five of the 12 cases, three of whom were either unvaccinated or vaccination status at the time of injury was unknown. All three cases received a tetanus vaccine at the time of injury. One case, in the age group 15-19 years, was reported to have received three doses of tetanus vaccine as a child and a booster at four years and again at five-six years of age. One case was reported to have received a single tetanus vaccine around 40 years prior to infection and at the time of injury.

Tetanus vaccine provides protection in 90-95% of children who are fully vaccinated. However, as protection declines over time up to 50% of 20-year-olds and up to 70% of 70-year-olds may be unprotected if they have not received boosters. The childhood immunisation schedule in Ireland recommends children receive a dose of tetanus toxoid-containing vaccine at two, four and six months of age and booster doses at four-five years and 11-14 years of age.

Persons aged 10 years or over (who are unimmunised or partly immunised) are recommended three doses of tetanus toxoid with intervals of at least one month between doses. A booster dose of tetanus toxoid should be given five years after the primary course and again 10 years later. For more detailed information on tetanus immunisations please see the document Immunisation Guidelines for Ireland available at www.immunisation.ie.

The figures presented in this summary are based on data extracted from the Computerised Infectious Disease Reporting (CIDR) system on 18th August 2009. These figures may differ slightly from those published previously due to ongoing updating of notification data on CIDR.