

February 10, 2004

### **Adacel™ {tetanus, diphtheria and acellular pertussis (whooping cough)} vaccine for adolescents**

- Adacel™ is the vaccine given to protect against tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis (whooping cough). This new vaccine protects adolescents and adults from pertussis. Earlier vaccines could only be used on infants and children.
- This three-in-one vaccine replaces the current grade 9 vaccination booster and extends pertussis protection into early adulthood. Yukon is also offering the vaccine to grade 12 students for the next three years to ensure all students graduating from high school from this year onwards will have received the recommended single dose of Adacel™.

#### **What is tetanus (lockjaw)?**

- Tetanus is caused by bacteria which are found in soil, dust and manure. If these bacteria infect a cut, they can produce a toxin (poison) that causes severe muscle spasms which can lead to death.

#### **What is diphtheria?**

- Diphtheria is caused by bacteria that infect the nose and throat, and may interfere with breathing. It can also cause skin and ear infections, heart failure, nerve damage and death.

#### **What is pertussis (whooping cough)?**

- Pertussis is caused by bacteria that spread easily from one person to another by coughing and sneezing. It causes bouts of severe coughing that interfere with breathing, eating and sleeping and may last for many weeks.
- Complications may include seizures or convulsions, pneumonia, and brain damage in young children. Babies under one year of age usually have to be hospitalized and may die from pertussis.
- Older children, teenagers and adults may cough so hard that they break a rib, get a hernia or collapse a lung.

#### **Why do teenagers need this vaccine?**

- Growing numbers of teenagers have been getting pertussis because the protection from their earlier childhood vaccinations has worn off. Adacel™, which includes acellular pertussis vaccine, will help prevent teenagers from getting whooping cough and spreading it. Tetanus and diphtheria boosters are needed every 10 years. Currently only one dose of adolescent/adult pertussis vaccine is required.

#### **How safe is Adacel™ vaccine?**

- Adacel™ vaccine is very safe.
- However, teenagers who had trouble breathing because of severe swelling of the face, neck or throat or developed hives when they were immunized in infancy and childhood with any previous vaccines should not get the combined tetanus, diphtheria and acellular pertussis vaccine.
- As with any vaccination, there may be some redness, swelling or pain at the place where the needle went into the arm. Warm cloths applied to the area in combination with acetaminophen (tylenol) will help.
- Some teenagers may experience headache, fever or decreased energy after they get the vaccine. If necessary, use acetaminophen (tylenol) to reduce fever.
- Since more frequent doses of the vaccine result in a greater possibility of getting a sore arm or other side effects from the vaccine, **the vaccine should be delayed for any teenager who has had a diphtheria-tetanus vaccination since grade 9.**
- A person who is sick with a fever or anything more than cold should not receive the vaccine until the person is well.
- If you have more questions, talk to your local health nurse or your doctor.