



# Tetanus

## Situation

A patient wasn't given appropriate prophylaxis and developed tetanus

## Background

A patient suffered a penetrating injury from a wooden fence post. They didn't receive appropriate tetanus prophylaxis in the ED.

## Assessment

All of the following count as tetanus prone wounds:

- wounds or burns that require surgical intervention that is delayed for more than six hours
- wounds or burns that show a significant degree of devitalised tissue or a puncture-type injury, particularly where there has been contact with soil or manure
- wounds containing foreign bodies
- compound fractures
- wounds or burns in patients who have systemic sepsis.

If a patient has one of these wounds AND the wound is considered to be high risk (heavy contamination with material likely to contain tetanus spores and/or extensive devitalised tissue) THEN the patient should receive im tetanus immunoglobulin 250iu regardless of their immunisation history.

Patients should also receive tetanus immunoglobulin for any tetanus prone wound if they haven't completed a full course of tetanus immunisation.

## Recommendation

Ensure you are familiar with UK guidance on tetanus.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tetanus-the-green-book-chapter-30>

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