



Health and Human Services MEDIA RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 16, 2015

Summer storms can produce flood waters *Be sure your tetanus vaccine is updated*

SARASOTA COUNTY — Local health officials encourage all residents to be sure they have a current tetanus vaccination as part of their hurricane preparedness plans.

There may be a lot of debris left by flooding following a severe storm. This is the reason health officials warn of the dangers of coming in contact with floodwaters. Residents working on clean-up efforts may be at risk for injuries and tetanus also known as ‘lock jaw.’ Commonly found in soil, dust, and manure, the tetanus bacteria can penetrate even a tiny pinprick or scratch. Deep puncture wounds or cuts, like those made by nails, knives or barbed-wire, are especially susceptible to infection with tetanus.

Infection from the tetanus bacteria can produce severe muscle spasms resulting in the "locking" of the jaw. This makes it difficult to open the mouth or swallow, and may even lead to death by suffocation.

Health officials remind residents that tetanus can be **prevented with vaccination**. Under normal conditions, all individuals should get a tetanus-diphtheria booster (TD) every 10 years. However, if you develop a moderate or severe injury, especially a puncture-type wound, and it has been five years or more since your last TD or tetanus/diphtheria/pertussis TDaP, you should get vaccinated again.



Proper care of all cuts and lacerations is essential to preventing infections even if you have not been exposed to flood waters. If you injure yourself, wash the affected area with soap and warm water, apply an anti-bacterial ointment and keep the wound dry by covering it with a bandage until it heals. “Contact your health care provider if the wound is severe or does not respond to home treatment and follow their tetanus vaccination recommendation,” says William Heymann, M.D., medical director for the Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County (DOH-Sarasota).

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MEDIA NOTES:

DOH-Sarasota Media Contact:

Dianne Shipley, 941-861-2852; cell 941-302-1058; DOHSarasotaNews@flhealth.gov

Website: www.sarasotahealth.org



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The TDaP provides the additional protection against pertussis or whooping cough. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) also advises expectant moms to get the TDaP vaccine with each pregnancy to protect their unborn baby and infants who are too young to be vaccinated.

TD and TDaP vaccines along with other vaccines for general health and wellness are available at DOH-Sarasota.

Immunizations are available at these locations (Monday-Friday):

William L. Little Health & Human Services Center
2200 Ringling Blvd., Sarasota
Walk-in services begin at 7:30 a.m.
Call for [hours](#) or to request an appointment
941-861-2900

North Port Health Center
6950 Outreach Way, North Port
Walk-in services begin at 7 a.m.
Call for [hours](#) or to request an appointment
941-861-3864

For more information, visit www.sarasotahealth.org or call 941-861-2900.

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