



CHCHD News

Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department

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Prevent tetanus during storm related cleanup

The risk of injury is high during a storm and while working to cleanup the aftermath. Prompt first aid can help heal small wounds and prevent infection. Medical care should be sought for more serious cuts or wounds.

Tetanus is a potential health threat for persons who have open wounds.

Tetanus is a very rare but serious illness caused when *C. tetani* bacteria, which is found naturally in the soil, enter puncture wounds or cuts. It is easily prevented through routine vaccination of children and adults. In addition to immunization, wearing protective gear such as heavy gloves and sturdy shoes when handling storm debris can help prevent exposure to the bacteria.

Adults and children should routinely receive a dose of tetanus vaccine every 10 years. If you experience a cut or puncture wound, you should clean it with soap and water and consult your healthcare provider. When you experience an injury, your healthcare provider may recommend that you receive a tetanus booster if it has been more than five years since your last dose. Many health care providers, immunizing pharmacists, and all local health departments routinely offer tetanus-containing vaccines for people who need it.

Recommendations for routine tetanus immunization:

- Children: DTaP at ages 2, 4, 6, 12 – 15 months, and 4 to 6 years of age
- Adolescents: a single dose of Tdap at 11-12 years of age, then Td every 10 years
- Adults: a single dose of Tdap, then Td every 10 years

All adults and children age 11 and up should receive one tetanus vaccine that also contains the Pertussis booster (Tdap). This protects not only themselves from pertussis-whooping cough-but also those infants and children around them who are too young to be completely immunized and who can become seriously ill if infected with pertussis. The Health Department and some healthcare providers have Tdap available for those who have not received it. For more information call your healthcare provider or the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department at 209-8190 or visit <http://health.hamiltontn.org/>.