

NEWS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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EAST CENTRAL DISTRICT HEALTH DEPARTMENT CONTINUES TO RESPOND TO AREA FLOODING

As clean up continues in the flooded areas surrounding Columbus, East Central District Health Dept. (ECDHD) has shifted its focus to disease prevention, focusing particularly on tetanus immunizations and clean water.

Over the past 2 days, ECDHD, in cooperation with other community partners, has set up 7 different mobile immunization clinics in Columbus, St. Edward and Schuyler. As of Thursday afternoon, more than 260 persons had received tetanus immunizations and booster shots.

One of the most frequently asked questions after a disaster is, "Do I need a vaccination?" The answer? Yes and no.

While most disasters do not increase the risk for tetanus, people need a tetanus shot (or booster) if:

- They do not remember the last time they had a tetanus booster shot.
- They have never had a tetanus vaccination.
- They have not had a tetanus booster shot in the past 10 years.
- They have a puncture wound or wound contaminated with feces, soil or saliva and have not had a tetanus vaccine booster in the last five years

More than half of the cases reported in the last 8 years, were among people 20 through 64 years of age. One of every 4 of the reported cases were older than 64 years of age, and this group has a greater risk of death if they get tetanus. Diabetes might increase the risk for tetanus.

Symptoms of tetanus are painful muscular contractions, primarily of the cheek muscles and neck muscles. Lockjaw is a common sign of tetanus. A common first sign of tetanus in older children and adults is abdominal rigidity, although rigidity is sometimes confined to the region of injury. Generalized spasms also occur.

Contaminated well water is also a major concern following a flood. If persons believe their well water has been contaminated, they are encouraged to have it tested, even without noticeable changes in the taste or smell of the water. ECDHD has free water testing kits that are available to the public.

For more information about tetanus or other vaccinations, please contact the Immunization Clinic at East Central District Health Dept. at (402) 562-7500 ext. 380. For information or questions regarding water contamination, or to get your free water testing kit, please contact the Environmental Health Coordinator at (402) 562-7500 ext. 266.

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