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## Overseas travelers and others advised to get vaccines updated now to protect against various diseases

As part of the August Immunization Awareness Month campaign, local health officials remind residents to catch up on their vaccinations. Immunization against vaccine-preventable diseases is one of the best forms of protection for people of all ages. This includes college-age students who may be studying abroad or living in dormitories, as well as those who may be traveling overseas for business, recreation, mission trips or adoptions.

“A number of organisms are real threats to health when traveling outside the United States. Many vaccine-preventable diseases, rarely seen in the U.S., are still prevalent in other parts of the world,” says Sarasota County Health Department Immunization Program Director Donna Keith.

Health officials say that recent outbreaks of measles and pertussis (whooping cough) originating from travelers who were not adequately vaccinated underscore the need for everyone to be up-to-date with all routine vaccinations. Since immunity tends to wane years after some vaccines are given, booster shots are often necessary to provide adequate protection from these diseases, which in rare instances can cause deafness and even death. In response to this, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) now recommends that everyone 7 years of age and older receive the pertussis protection (known as Tetanus Diphtheria acellular Pertussis or TDaP) one time as part of their Tetanus Diphtheria booster. In addition to providing protection to the person vaccinated, it also helps protect infants who are not old enough (less than 12-18 months of age) to be fully immunized with the initial series of four Diphtheria Tetanus acellular Pertussis (DTaP) vaccines.

The Health Department can assist persons with overseas travel medical needs, including immigration physicals and screenings.

“Although we can accommodate last-minute travelers, ideally you should allow four-to-six weeks before your trip to receive all needed vaccines as well as prescriptions for anti-malarial and anti-diarrhea medications,” says Keith. “We can discuss the vaccines you need prior to your appointment and, with sufficient lead time, provide the vaccines you need over the course of several weeks, meeting everyone’s budget.”

Visit CDC’s Travelers’ Health website at <http://www.cdc.gov/travel> for more information about any disease risks and CDC health recommendations for international travel in areas you plan to visit.

For information or to make an appointment for routine adult or overseas travel vaccinations, call 941-861-2794 in Sarasota or 941-861-3864 in North Port, or visit the Sarasota County Health Department website at [www.sarasotahealth.org](http://www.sarasotahealth.org).