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E-NEWSLETTER

EVENT CALENDAR

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Young adults reminded to get vaccines to stay healthy

August is Immunization Awareness Month

SARASOTA --- As part of the August Immunization Awareness Month campaign, local health officials remind people, especially young adults who are 19-26 years old, to catch up on their vaccinations.

The following groups are encouraged to get vaccinations to maintain health and wellness: college-age students studying abroad or living in dormitories; overseas travelers leaving the country on business, for recreation, mission trips or adoptions; persons who are sexually active; pregnant women; new parents and caregivers to young children; and persons with certain health conditions, occupational and lifestyle risks.

Vaccines offer safe and effective protection against influenza (flu), pneumonia, human papilloma virus (HPV), tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough) and many other vaccine-preventable diseases. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), over 40 million adults die each year from diseases that can be effectively prevented with immunizations.

Flu vaccine

The flu vaccine continues to be the best defense against circulating flu viruses. Health officials say that you need to get vaccinated every year because the immune protection declines over time. The protection you receive from a flu vaccine begins about two weeks after getting vaccinated. The 2013-2014 seasonal flu vaccines will be available beginning in late August or early September at the downtown Sarasota and North Port locations of the Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County (DOH-Sarasota) and at area pharmacies.

Pneumonia vaccine

A serious bout with the flu can cause some people to be more susceptible to developing pneumonia, a potentially life-threatening illness. Those living with diabetes, heart, liver, kidney or sickle cell disease; alcoholism; an organ or bone marrow transplant or a suppressed immune system; asthma or lung diseases; or who currently smoke, are especially at risk for serious and sometimes deadly complications from any respiratory infection, including the flu. Although the pneumonia vaccine will not keep someone from getting the flu, it is a proactive measure for those at risk for complications from the flu. A person will only need one additional pneumonia shot after the age of 65 for lifetime immunity. There should be a minimum of five years between the two shots.

"While many adults faithfully take the annual flu shot, they are not up-to-date on other CDC recommended vaccinations," said DOH-Sarasota Immunization Program Director Donna Keith.

Human papilloma virus (HPV) Gardasil vaccine

Human papilloma virus (HPV), which causes cervical, oral, anal and penile cancer, as well as genital warts, is a sexually transmitted disease contracted through contact with bodily fluids during vaginal, anal or oral sex. Both males and females 13-26 years of age are at the highest risk of contracting HPV. This disease can be prevented through three doses of the Gardasil vaccine given over six months.

The vaccine is recommended for girls and young women ages 9-26, and for boys and young men ages 9-21. The vaccine recommendation extends to age 26 among men who have sex with men. The CDC reports that this vaccine has been shown to be 90 percent effective in preventing genital warts and at least 70 percent effective in preventing cervical cancer. The vaccine is most effective when it is given prior to the young person becoming sexually active.

Tetanus (lockjaw)

Tetanus or "lockjaw" is a bacterial disease that affects the nervous system. Infection with tetanus causes severe muscle spasms, leading to "locking" of the jaw so that the individual cannot open his/her mouth or swallow, and may even lead to death by suffocation. Tetanus is contracted through a cut or wound that becomes contaminated with the tetanus bacteria.

"Tetanus is not spread from person to person. It can be prevented with vaccination," said Keith. "It is especially important for adults working in health care fields and those who work or have hobbies that increase their risk of getting dirty puncture wounds, such as fishing and gardening, to be up-to-date on their tetanus vaccination."

Pertussis (whooping cough)

Health officials say that recent outbreaks of pertussis (whooping cough) underscore the need for everyone to be up-to-date on all routine vaccinations. Since immunity tends to wane years after vaccines are given, booster shots are often necessary to provide adequate protection from whooping cough, which in can cause serious respiratory distress and even death, particularly in infants and very young children.

Tetanus boosters (Td and TDaP)

Tetanus diphtheria (Td) boosters are recommended every 10 years. The CDC recommends a one-time dose (booster) of tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis (TDaP) in place of one Td booster in those 10 years of age and older. Pregnant women are now advised to get a TDaP booster with each pregnancy, preferably in the second or third trimester. In addition to providing protection to the person vaccinated, it also helps to protect infants less than 12-18 months of age, who are at very high risk for severe complications from pertussis, and are not old enough to be fully immunized.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 75 percent of the 42,000 people diagnosed with pertussis in the U.S. in 2012 were infants and young children. It was found that four out of five babies who got the disease caught it from someone in their home, such as a parent, sister, brother, grandparent or babysitter. Adults who do not get vaccinated can put others, including children, at risk. This is why adult vaccines are critical to the health of our community.

Health officials encourage persons to talk to their health care provider about their vaccine needs. If traveling outside the United States, specialty vaccines are recommended to protect individuals from diseases that are not prevalent in this country.

[Click here to see what vaccinations you need.](#)

Those who are 19-26 years of age and lack health insurance can get the Gardasil and TDaP vaccines at no charge at DOH-Sarasota Immunization Clinics. Health officials also are offering the pneumonia vaccine at no charge for those in the 19-26 age group who are at high risk for lung diseases and certain other chronic diseases.

Immunizations are available at two locations, Monday-Friday. Call for hours at each location. Appointments are encouraged for adults. The locations are:

William L. Little Health & Human Services Center

2200 Ringling Blvd., Sarasota
941-861-2900

North Port Health Center

6950 Outreach Way, North Port
941-861-3864

For more information, visit www.sarasotahealth.org or the CDC website at www.cdc.gov/vaccines.

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