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NEWSROOM

PUBLIC RECORDS REQUEST

MEETINGS AND AGENDAS

E-NEWSLETTER

EVENT CALENDAR

Feb. 21, 2013

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Local health officials remind people to get vaccines to stay healthy

Local health officials remind everyone to get all recommended vaccines to remain healthy. Vaccines offer safe and effective protection against influenza (flu), pneumonia, tetanus, pertussis (or whooping cough) and many other vaccine-preventable diseases. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than 40 million adults die each year from diseases that can be effectively prevented with immunizations.

The flu vaccine continues to be the best defense against this season's circulating flu viruses. If you haven't already gotten your annual flu vaccine, now is the time to get one. The vaccine continues to be available at the Sarasota County Health Department (SCHD) and at area pharmacies.

"You need to get vaccinated every year because the immune protection declines over time," says SCHD Medical Director Dr. William Heymann. "The protection you receive from a vaccine begins about two weeks after getting vaccinated."

A serious bout with the flu can cause some people to be more susceptible to developing pneumonia, a potentially life-threatening illness. According to the CDC, you should receive one dose of pneumonia vaccine before age 65 if you have the following conditions: asthma, lung diseases or are a smoker, diabetes, heart, liver, kidney or sickle cell disease, alcoholism, organ or bone marrow transplant, or a suppressed immune system. Although the pneumonia vaccine will not keep you from getting the flu, it is a proactive measure to protect against the serious and sometimes deadly complications that may result from any respiratory infection, including the flu. You 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.

Health officials say that recent outbreaks of whooping cough (pertussis) 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 rare instances, can cause serious respiratory distress and even death.

In a recent Thomson Reuters article, Dr. Howard Koh, an assistant secretary for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services said: "in 2012, there were 42,000 people diagnosed with whooping cough (pertussis). Nearly a quarter of these cases were in adults – the rest were in infants and young children. During further investigation, it was found that four out of five babies who got whooping cough caught it from someone in their home, such as a parent, sister, brother, grandparent or babysitter. Adults who don't get vaccinated can put others, including children, at risk." This is why adult vaccines are critical to the health of our community.

Tetanus diphtheria (Td) boosters are recommended every 10 years. CDC recommends a one-time dose (booster) of tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis (Tdap) for adults, regardless of age, in place of one of their 10-year Td booster shots. In response to the alarming increase of pertussis (whooping cough) across the U.S., CDC recently revised its recommendations for pregnant women. Now with each pregnancy, women should receive a dose of Tdap, preferably in the second or third trimester. This helps in providing immunity to infants who are too young to receive the vaccine.

"While many adults faithfully take the annual flu shot, they are not up-to-date on other [CDC recommended vaccinations](#)," said Dr. Heymann. Health officials encourage adults to talk to your health care provider about whether, in addition to

Tetanus diphtheria, you would benefit from the shingles vaccine, hepatitis A and B vaccines or the HPV vaccine to prevent cervical cancer. Additionally, if traveling outside the United States, specialty vaccines are recommended to protect you from diseases that are not prevalent in this country.

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

Immunizations for children, adults and travelers are available at the Sarasota County Health Department Monday-Friday:

Sarasota County Health Department
2200 Ringling Blvd., Sarasota
Call for hours – appointments are encouraged
941-861-2900

North Port Health Center
6950 Outreach Way, North Port
Call for hours – appointments are encouraged
941-861-3864

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