



Press Release

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Tetanus is a debris hazard

Galveston County and Cities – Injuries that result from Hurricane Ike debris are a health hazard. One of the hazards is developing tetanus or lockjaw after receiving a laceration or puncture wound from hurricane debris. Already, there is one reported case of tetanus in a Galveston County resident who sustained a puncture injury from Hurricane Ike debris.

Tetanus is an uncommon disease of the nervous system caused by a bacteria commonly found in the soil and in the intestines and feces of many household and farm animals and humans. Early symptoms of the illness include: lockjaw, stiffness in the neck and abdomen, and difficulty swallowing. Any person with these symptoms should seek immediate medical attention.

Fortunately, tetanus is a vaccine preventable illness. A tetanus shot is routinely recommended for both children and adults. The vaccine is part of the regular childhood vaccination schedule, and is routinely recommended every ten years for adults. After a puncture wound or laceration, a tetanus shot is recommended if it has been longer than five years since the last one.

The Galveston County Health District is strongly urging all residents to receive a tetanus shot according to the recommendations for children and adults.

"We definitely understand everyone is working hard to clear hurricane debris. It is important for everyone to be safe and remain healthy as we recover," said Dr. Mark Guidry Galveston County Health Authority.

Residents can also reduce the risk of injury and illness when dealing with debris with some simple steps: have plenty of hand sanitizer, wear thick long-sleeved shirts and long pants, use protective gloves to handle sharp and contaminated objects, wear protective footwear such as work boots, and have clean water and a first aid kit with bandages, and antibiotic ointment in case of a puncture wound or laceration.

Due to Hurricane Ike, state supplied tetanus along with flu vaccine is available free of charge at the Galveston County Health District's three immunization clinics, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Clinic locations:

- Island Community Center, 4700 Broadway, Galveston
- Texas City Immunization Clinic, 2000 Texas Avenue, Texas City
- Dickinson Immunization Clinic, 905 FM 517 E, Dickinson

"Get a tetanus shot if it has been more than ten years since your last one," Guidry said, "and seek medical care after a puncture or laceration and a tetanus booster shot if your last one was more than five years ago."