



**STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN RESOURCES
BUREAU FOR PUBLIC HEALTH**

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IMPORTANT JULY 2017 FLOODING INFORMATION

TO: Local Health Departments
FROM: Rahul Gupta, MD, MPH, FACP
Commissioner and State Health Officer
DATE: JULY 29, 2017
RE: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO COMMUNITY PARTNERS

The West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, Bureau for Public Health is informing all Local Health Departments (LHDs) of important health information as a result of the July 2017 flooding occurring in the state.

Tetanus Vaccine May Be Needed for Flood Clean-Up Efforts

Residents who will be working in flood clean-up following the July 2017 flood should be reminded of the need to check their immunization status to ensure they are protected against tetanus, in addition to protecting existing wounds from infection. This is usually done by getting a tetanus booster every 10 years. Tetanus is a disease contracted by getting the tetanus bacteria into an open cut or wound. Although tetanus is rare, it can be very serious or even fatal.

Tetanus booster vaccine is now usually combined with diphtheria and pertussis vaccines known as "Tdap" to provide protection against all three diseases. Unless previously vaccinated with the same, Tdap is the recommended vaccine for persons 7 years of age and older. Td (tetanus and diphtheria) is recommended for booster doses for persons 7 years and older who have previously received a dose of Tdap.

Exposure to flood water is not enough to receive the vaccine. It is vitally important to thoroughly screen persons when evaluating their need for tetanus-containing vaccine. Persons who receive the vaccine in shorter intervals are at increased risk for a local reaction (e.g., pain or swelling at the injection site).

In addition to immunization, it is important to remember that open wounds and rashes exposed to flood waters can become infected. To protect yourself and your family:

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- Avoid exposure to flood waters if you have an open wound.
- Cover open wounds with a waterproof bandage.
- Keep open wounds as clean as possible by washing well with soap and clean water.
- If a wound develops redness, swelling, or drainage, seek immediate medical attention.

For more information about tetanus vaccine visit www.immunization.wv.gov or contact your local health department.