



OHIO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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Date: February 28, 2011
To: Local Health Districts
From: Sietske de Fijter, MS *Sef*
Chief, Bureau of Infectious Diseases
Subject: Use of tetanus vaccine following natural disasters

Every year, Ohioans are impacted by natural disasters, such as floods and tornadoes. After a natural disaster occurs, the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) Immunization Program often receives requests for tetanus-containing vaccine (i.e., Td, Tdap) for mass vaccination clinics.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) does not recommend any special immunizations for response workers. Diseases prevented by vaccines are uncommon following natural disasters and conducting mass vaccinations for volunteers can pull needed resources away from other rescue and clean-up efforts. It is recommended that all individuals keep up-to-date on preventive vaccines before disasters hit.

The ODH policy is that tetanus-containing vaccine used for emergency response requires proper screening. The use of ODH-supplied vaccine must be targeted only to individuals receiving a puncture wound or wound contaminated with feces, soil, or saliva during recovery following a natural disaster. The person with the injury should have a medical professional, preferably a physician or nurse practitioner, determine whether a booster is necessary, based on the condition of the wound and the patient's immunization history. This policy was reviewed by the Ohio Immunization Advisory Committee. The Immunization Advisory Committee also reviewed CDC recommendations, policies from other states, and tetanus surveillance data for Ohio. After a thorough review of these materials, the Immunization Advisory Committee recommended that the current ODH policy remain in effect.

The ODH Immunization Program has created a pamphlet titled "Vaccines Not Needed for Disaster Clean-up" (attached). This resource is also posted on the ODH website at <http://www.odh.ohio.gov/ASSETS/3729943241F84E6186B75F5F97F8E25A/VaccineVolunteers.pdf>.

If you have any questions, please contact your Immunization Consultant at (614) 466-4643 or (800) 282-0546.

Attachment: 1

Vaccines Not Needed for Disaster Clean-up

After a natural disaster, the wreckage left behind poses additional injury risks. Although nothing can be done to prevent natural disasters, there are actions you can take to protect your health and safety. One way to ensure you are prepared is to check with your doctor now to be sure that you are up-to-date on all immunizations.

Wounds

If you get an injury or wound during clean-up efforts, check your healthcare provider to see if you need a tetanus vaccination. The type of wound, the area you were when injury occurred and your vaccination history will be used to decide if you require another tetanus booster.

Tetanus/Diphtheria/Pertussis

It is recommended that all adults get a tetanus booster shot every 10 years, starting at 11-12 years of age after completion of the initial childhood series before school entry (DTaP). You should receive a pertussis—containing tetanus booster some time as a regular booster dose (Tdap). It is the individual's responsibility to maintain up-to-date immunizations before disasters occur.

Hepatitis A and B

It is not necessary to receive these shots for clean-up efforts, even if dealing with sewage. It is recommended that all ages be vaccinated against these diseases.

Immunizations

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) does not require or even recommend any special immunizations before you start as a worker to help clean up and assist with disaster recovery. Diseases prevented by vaccines are uncommon following natural disasters. There are other safety issues to consider, but to have mass vaccinations for volunteers can pull needed resources away from other rescue and clean-up efforts. Volunteers will not need special shots for tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis or hepatitis. It is recommended that all individuals keep up-to-date on preventive vaccines **before** disasters hit.



Safety and Preventing Infections

To protect you from injuries during disaster clean-ups:

- Wear protective clothing
 - Heavy, waterproof, puncture-resistant gloves
 - Waterproof, hard-soled shoes
 - Long sleeve shirt and long pants
 - Safety goggles and hard hats
- Be aware of possible hazards in your area
 - Heavy equipment
 - Chainsaws and generators in use
 - Downed power lines
 - Gas lines ruptured
- Wash your hands frequently using clean water and soap
- If injured—immediately obtain assistance of first aid if a first aid station is nearby or
 - Wash your hands before touching any wounds
 - Clean area with soap and water
 - Apply clean dressing
 - If wound is more serious—clean area, cover and seek medical attention
- You may need to seek outside medical care for even minor wounds if no treatment is available in the area.

If you have immunization questions contact your:

- Local health department-contact information is available at:
<http://www.odh.gov/localHealthDistricts/lhddirectory.aspx>
- Ohio Department of Health
 - at 1-800-282-0546 or 614-466-4643
 - email: immunize@odh.ohio.gov
 - visit our website: <http://www.odh.ohio.gov/>

For more disaster clean-up information you may also visit the CDC website: <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/>

This information was adapted from Minnesota Department of Health 01/2011. Photo from the City of Morgan Hill CERT response site www.mhcert.com

