

# SCC Health Offers Free Tdap Shots at July Clinics

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*St. Charles County, Missouri* – During the last several years, cases of pertussis (whooping cough) among adults have risen across the United States. This is especially troubling for parents and caregivers, as this disease can be deadly if spread to infants. To help St. Charles County residents prevent pertussis, as well as to protect against tetanus and diphtheria, the Department of Community Health and the Environment's Immunization Clinic will offer up to 300 free Tdap vaccinations at any of three clinic sessions on July 18 and 25.

"As vaccine protection for these three diseases fades over time and many adults have not been vaccinated since they were kids, we're discovering more and more adults are suffering from pertussis due to weakened immunity — and what's even more scary — are passing this disease on to the children they love," Division of Public Health Director Hope Woodson said. "Getting a one-time Tdap vaccination and subsequent tetanus booster shots every 10 years after that will help prevent the spread of these diseases. To be most effective, caregivers (parents, grandparents, daycare staff and others) should complete their vaccination at least two weeks before coming in close contact with an infant or young child."

Offered in conjunction with the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services and open to all St. Charles County residents ages 11 and older, these special clinics will provide FREE Tdap vaccinations to the first 300 individuals at each session — with a special emphasis placed on vaccinating adults who interact with children. The three sessions will operate from 8:30-11:30 a.m. on July 18 and from 8:30-11:30 a.m. or 1:30-4:30 p.m. on July 25 at the Division of Public Health (Main Conference Room on the upper level at 1650 Boone's Lick Road in St. Charles). A parent or guardian must accompany children ages 11-18 and must bring along the child's shot record to avoid unnecessary vaccinations. This clinic will operate on a first-come, first-served basis, so no appointment is necessary. Individuals with questions about this special program should call 636.949.1857.

If individuals are unable to attend one of these special free sessions, the Immunization Clinic can provide these or additional vaccinations on an appointment basis during normal hours (although there may be a nominal fee, which may be covered by a private insurance provider, for all routinely scheduled immunizations). The clinic operates every weekday (except Thursdays and holidays) from 8:30 to 11 a.m. and 1:30 to 4 p.m. (with extended hours until 5:30 p.m. on Tuesdays). Patients must schedule an appointment for these routine visits to the Immunization Clinic by calling 636.949.1857. For more information on vaccinations provided through the Immunization Clinic, please visit the Public Health section at <http://health.sccmo.org/health>.

Recognizable by violent (and long-lasting) coughs, pertussis is caused by the bacterium *Bordetella pertussis*. Most common in children and their caregivers, pertussis is spread through coughing and sneezing by affected individuals. Prior to the onset of the coughing, symptoms are similar to that of the "common cold" — including a runny nose, a low fever and exhaustion.

Although treatable with antibiotics, this disease is especially dangerous to infants, who face the risk of death due to respiratory blockages.

Occurring when the bacteria *Clostridium tetani* enter the body, tetanus produces a toxin that can cause a person's neck and jaw muscles to lock (leading to the infection's nickname of "lockjaw"). Although the disease is not spread from person-to-person, it is common in soil and rusty metals. The bacteria enter the body through broken skin or wounds that are exposed to a contaminated object, such as rusty nails, needles or dirty soils. In addition to involuntary muscle tightening, symptoms of tetanus include headache, trouble swallowing, seizures, high fever and sweating, and high blood pressure or a fast heart rate. Tetanus treatment requires extensive medical assistance and aggressive wound care using antibiotics and other drugs.

Although there were no cases of diphtheria in the United States from 2004-2008, medical officials have recorded many new cases across the globe in recent years as a result of lax vaccinations or the waning of immunity over time. Spread from person-to-person through respiratory droplets expelled through coughing or sneezing, diphtheria is caused by the bacterium *Corynebacterium diphtheriae*. Noticeable by a swollen neck that occurs within a few days of exposure, other symptoms include overall weakness, a sore throat, fever and difficulty breathing or swallowing. If absorbed into the bloodstream, the resulting toxin can damage the heart, kidneys and nerves. Since about 1-in-10 patients diagnosed with diphtheria will die, immediate treatment, including isolation and medication with both antitoxins and antibiotics, is required.

The St. Charles County Department of Community Health and the Environment is committed to the protection and enhancement of health and the quality of life for all members of our community. Through three divisions — Public Health, Environmental Public Health and Protection, and Humane Services — the department coordinates with federal, state, and local organizations to provide a wide range of services that have a profound impact on the lives of St. Charles County's residents and visitors. To discover ways that the department assists this region or to learn about volunteer opportunities with any of the divisions, please visit <http://health.sccmo.org/health> or call 636.949.7400.

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