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Now is the Time to Encourage Adult Patients to Get a Tetanus-Diphtheria Booster

Summertime finds people of all ages heading outside to garden, picnic, and have fun in the sun. Outdoor recreation can create problems, however, and one of them is potential tetanus exposure. According to CDC, 31% of reported tetanus-related injuries occur in yards, gardens and farms; and another 23% occur in other outdoor locations. The majority of the 25 tetanus cases reported in the U.S. in 2002, including two fatal cases, occurred in persons who were not appropriately vaccinated against tetanus or who had an unknown vaccination history. The last case of tetanus reported in Nevada occurred in 1995 (not in Washoe County).

Given the popularity of gardening and other outdoor activities, it's important that health professionals make sure patients, particularly older patients, are fully and currently immunized against tetanus (and diphtheria). According to an MMWR surveillance report, in 1998-2000 only 40% of persons 65 years and older reported receiving a booster dose of tetanus toxoid in the previous 10 years; and 75% of reported tetanus deaths occurred among patients 60 years of age or older. Clearly, many older adults are not adequately immunized against tetanus and some are suffering and dying as a result. Other at-risk populations include persons of Hispanic ethnicity, older diabetics, injection-drug users, pregnant women, persons with philosophical objections to vaccines, and persons who might not have received a primary series (e.g., immigrants).

An array of free tetanus information for patients and professionals is available from the following sources:

- ♦ For a variety of materials, including a patient-education brochure that can be downloaded or ordered free of charge, visit the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases website at <http://www.nfid.org/powerof10>.
- ♦ For professional resources, including a clinical information slide set, international travel information, and excerpts from the "Pink Book," visit the CDC website at

<http://www.cdc.gov/nip/menus/diseases.htm#tetanus>.

- ♦ For journal articles, recommendations, state laws, case histories, photos, and other resources, visit the Immunization Action Coalition website at <http://www.immunize.org/tetanus>.
- ♦ For Vaccine Information Statements for tetanus-containing vaccines in 28 languages, go to: <http://www.immunize.org/vis/index.htm#index>

Source: "Tetanus Surveillance—United States, 1998-2000." *MMWR*, June 20, 2003, Vol. 52[SS03].

New Edition: "International Travel and Health 2004" Available on the WHO Website

Newly available on the WHO website, "International Travel and Health 2004" offers guidance on the full range of health risks likely to be encountered at specific destinations and associated with different types of travel—from business, humanitarian, and leisure travel to backpacking and adventure tours. The information is intended to help the medical profession be fully aware of potential risks and to provide appropriate advice regarding vaccinations, protection against insects and other disease vectors, and safety in different environmental settings. To allow for regular updates, the 2004 edition is available online only. To access it, go to: <http://www.who.int/ith/> and click on the chapter titles at the top of the screen.



Washoe County Viral Meningitis and West Nile Virus (WNV) Surveillance

The District Health Department has received reports of 13 cases of viral meningitis to-date in 2004. One 14-month-old case has been laboratory-confirmed positive for enterovirus (Echovirus 30) in cerebrospinal fluid. WNV has the same seasonal pattern as enteroviruses. WNV-associated meningitis tends to occur among older persons (median age: 46 years), whereas children and young adults (median age: 13 years) are at highest risk for enteroviral meningitis. Health care providers are encouraged to include testing for enteroviruses in younger patients with aseptic meningitis even during a documented WNV outbreak. No cases of WNV have been reported in Washoe County to-date.

Please share this document with all physicians & staff in your facility/office.