

**July 14, 2010**

**Media Contact:** Dianne Shipley, 941-861-2852; cell: 941-302-1058;  
Dianne\_shipley@doh.state.fl.us

## **Vaccines protect against many diseases – reminder to get yours updated now**

As part of the August Immunization Awareness Month campaign, local health officials remind residents to catch up on their vaccinations as our community prepares for the upcoming flu season and as students return to school and college.

Vaccines offer safe and effective protection against pertussis or whooping cough, hepatitis, chickenpox, pneumonia and many other vaccine-preventable diseases. Health officials say that although these diseases still exist, they are less common because vaccines are working.

“When people stay up-to-date on recommended vaccinations, our entire community benefits,” says Sarasota County Health Department (SCHD) medical director Dr. William Heymann. Sarasota County experienced an outbreak of pertussis a few years ago due in part to the waning immunity against the disease in pre-teens. “By ensuring that youths get a booster shot at age 11, and all adults - especially those who have contact with young infants - have a one-time booster of pertussis when they are due for their tetanus diphtheria vaccine, we are able to reduce the likelihood of another outbreak.” Whooping cough causes coughing that lasts for weeks, even months. Coughing spells can lead to breathing, eating and sleeping problems and in serious cases may result in hospitalization, pneumonia, and even death.

Because children are particularly vulnerable to infection, the majority of vaccines that protect against childhood diseases are needed during the first five to six years of life. Children should receive vaccines against diphtheria, influenza, tetanus, pertussis, measles, mumps, rubella, chickenpox, polio, hepatitis A, hepatitis B, and others. Adolescents should receive vaccines to protect against flu, meningococcal disease, hepatitis A, hepatitis B, and the Tdap vaccine, a booster against tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis.

Parents are encouraged to check their children’s vaccination records since these vaccines must be up-to-date for them to enter Sarasota County schools on Aug. 23. Students who are leaving for college may also need proof of immunizations.

Vaccines recommended for adults include the following: influenza, zoster (shingles), pneumococcal disease, tetanus, and diphtheria. In addition, vaccines against certain diseases are recommended for those traveling outside of the country. Health officials say that everyone over six months of age should get vaccinated against the flu. This year’s flu vaccine which will be available in early fall will include protection against the 2009 H1N1 (swine) flu virus.

“more”

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) immunization schedules](#) list the ages when each vaccine or series of shots is given. If children, adolescents, or adults have missed any shots, consult the catch-up schedule and check with your doctor about getting back on track. Additionally, the CDC also recommends that all 11- and 12-year-old girls receive the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine, which protects against the most common types of cervical cancer.

The SCHD, through the federally-funded Vaccines for Children (VFC) program, offers free immunizations to children from families who lack health insurance or whose insurance does not pay for immunizations. No appointment is needed. A parent or legal guardian must be present, and **must bring prior shot records**.

Foreign travel vaccines are also available for a fee, which includes a consultation with a registered nurse and administration of the needed vaccines. Those who are planning trips out of the country in places where vaccines may be needed are advised to contact the SCHD at least six weeks before their planned departure.

#### **Sarasota County Health Department**

Children's Immunization Clinic  
2200 Ringling Blvd., Sarasota  
Monday through Friday  
Please call 941-861-2784 for hours.

#### **South County Family Health Center**

South County Resource Center (just north of State College of Florida formerly Manatee Community College)  
19501 W Villages Pkwy, Building B2  
North Port, FL 34293-5100 [map](#)  
(Formerly 7820 Tamiami Trl S, Venice - same location, new address)  
Monday through Friday  
Please call 941-861-3338 for hours.

For more information, please contact your health care provider or the Sarasota County Health Department at the numbers provided above or visit their Web site: [www.sarasotahealth.org](http://www.sarasotahealth.org). Click on **related links** on the immunization page to find the CDC's child, adolescent, and adult immunization schedules, as well as recommended pre-teen vaccinations, and foreign travel shot information.

Beginning in the fall, people can call the Flu Information Line at 941-861-2800 or visit [www.sarasotahealth.org](http://www.sarasotahealth.org) for a schedule of flu shot clinics. Touch screen health kiosks are also available at local libraries for those who do not have access to a computer. The Sarasota County Call Center has a TDD line, 941-861-1833, available for those who are hearing-impaired

-end-