

Immunizations

during natural disasters

When responding to and recovering from a natural disaster it is important for emergency responders, volunteers and especially residents to assure that they are fully immunized against infections and diseases, such as tetanus.

The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services urges people in the areas impacted to follow these recommendations related to immunizations.

What vaccines do I need before going back into the disaster area?

Clean-up and repair activities during and after a disaster present a greater risk of injuries that can lead to serious infection. One of the most serious infections is tetanus, also known as “Lock Jaw,” which can be deadly.

Tetanus infection is preventable by vaccination.

- You should get a booster dose of tetanus-diphtheria (Td) vaccine if you have not had a dose within the past 10 years.
- You should also get a Td booster if you are unsure of the last time you received a Td shot.
- Anyone who receives a deep cut or puncture wound during reentry and clean-up activities should seek immediate medical attention and ask about a Td booster.
- Children and youth 11-18 years should receive the new pertussis-containing Tdap vaccine, rather than Td, if available.
- For more information on immunizations, contact your health care provider or your local public health agency. You can also contact the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, Bureau of Immunization Assessment and Assurance at 573-526-0238 or by email at info@health.mo.gov.

What if I do not have my original vaccination records?

Consult your health care provider or your local public health agency. Health care providers should follow CDC’s September 2005 recommendations for persons who do not have their immunization records.

- Children aged 10 years and younger should be treated as if they were up-to-date for their age and given any doses recommended for their current age and not received in the interim. This applies to all children except when they are not up-to-date on his/her immunizations.
- Children and youth aged 11-18 years should receive recommended vaccines (Tdap, MCV, and influenza if indicated) if not already received.
- Adults should receive Tdap, PPV, and influenza vaccines (if indicated).
- In addition, any displaced person living in a crowded group setting should receive influenza, varicella, and MMR vaccines. However, anyone in this situation who has a weakened immune system (e.g., cancer or dialysis patient) should not receive the live virus vaccines MMR and varicella.