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Tetanus Prevention after Hurricane Ike

Harris County Public Health & Environmental Services is urging all residents of Harris County to be extremely cautious around debris and other storm hazards because of the increased risk of exposure to tetanus. Individuals can be exposed to tetanus through the soil, structural debris (especially dirty nails), and human and animal feces.

Tetanus is a serious but preventable disease that causes severe muscle spasms, lockjaw and even death.

If you have not received a tetanus shot in the last 10 years or do not remember the date of your last vaccination, contact your health care provider.

If you get a cut or an open wound while working with storm debris, wash it thoroughly with soap and warm, clean water to avoid infection. Apply an antibiotic ointment. For more serious wounds that develop redness, swelling, drainage or do not stop bleeding, seek immediate medical attention.

Tetanus has long been identified as a top health concern for anyone working in disaster recovery areas. Protect yourself and your family from tetanus by getting a tetanus shot now if you have not received one in the last 10 years.