

## To Your Health!

By Judy Hargis, P.A.



### Health and Vaccine Update

The Advisory Committee on immunization practices (ACIP) has issued new recommendations for the use of the tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis vaccine for adolescent and adult populations in the United States. Tdap vaccine for adolescents became available in 2005 after years of recommending TD (tetanus and diphtheria) for adolescents and adults. In 2006 new recommendations extended to health care personnel and persons in contact with children under 12 months. It is now recommended that adolescents 11 thru 18 years and adults 19 thru 64 years get a Tdap booster, followed by Td boosters at recommended intervals.

Tdap vaccine protects against three serious diseases: tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis, which are each caused by specific bacteria. The bacteria that cause diphtheria and pertussis, are spread from person to person through airborne droplets when infected people cough, sneeze or talk. The bacteria that cause tetanus enter the body through cuts, scratches or wounds. Infection from diphtheria causes a thick covering in the back of the throat that can lead to breathing problems, paralysis, heart failure and, in some cases, death. Pertussis causes severe coughing spells and vomiting. It can cause weight loss, rib fractures from intense coughing, pneumonia and hospitalization due to complications. Tetanus causes painful tightening and paralysis of the muscles throughout the body. This can impact the ability to breath and can cause a locking of the jaw so the affected person cannot open his/her mouth or swallow. Tetanus leads to death in two out of every ten cases. These are very serious illnesses that caused many deaths prior to the advent of vaccines.

Td vaccine has been used for many years in adults and adolescents as a booster. The new vaccine now has the added protection of pertussis. There is good reason for this change. For years we assumed that childhood immunizations with pertussis offered lifetime protection. In 2004 there were 24,000 cases of pertussis. More than 8,000 of these cases were among adolescents, and over 7,000 cases were in adults. Two in

100 adolescents and five in 100 adults end up in the hospital with complications. In recent years, the increase in outbreaks of pertussis in adolescents and adults has led to the creation of this new vaccine. It is important to be aware that there can be side effects and risks associated with any vaccine, and the vaccine may be contraindicated in some individuals. For more information on Tdap talk to your health care provider.

While we are on the subject of vaccines, flu season is just around the corner and it is time to get your annual flu shot. Everyone is aware of flu season but there still can be misinformation and confusion about the flu and flu vaccine. Flu is a contagious respiratory infection. It is caused by a virus and can cause mild to severe illness. In some cases, it can lead to complications and even death.

The flu virus is thought to be spread by airborne droplets made when people with the flu cough, sneeze or talk. The flu virus can be passed to others before the infected person even knows they are sick. Most people who are infected may be able to infect others one day before symptoms occur and up to seven days after becoming ill. Symptoms of the flu can include one or all of the following: fever, cough, sore throat, muscle aches, headaches, fatigue. The symptoms can be very similar to those experienced with the common cold and other upper respiratory infections. People with certain chronic medical illnesses, older people, pregnant women and young children are more vulnerable.

Flu seasons are unpredictable and can be severe. Complications of the flu can include bacterial pneumonia, ear infections, sinus infections, dehydration and worsening of chronic illnesses. Flu season can begin as early as October with flu illnesses peaking in January. The flu vaccine is recommended for everyone 6 months and older. The vaccine comes in two forms. One form is an injection (shot) and the other form is a nasal spray. The nasal spray form is recommended for use in healthy people ages 2-49 years of age who are not pregnant. As with any vaccine, there can be side effects and contraindications in certain people. It is important that you take immunizations seriously as they are critical to the prevention of serious illnesses and their complications.

October is Breast Cancer awareness month, so I would be remiss to not mention the importance of routine breast cancer screen-

ing for men and women. I want to remind everyone that men get breast cancer too. Yes, men have breast tissue. Of the estimated 209,060 new cases of invasive breast cancer diagnosed in the United States this year, nearly 2000 will be men, according to the American Cancer Society. Men need to be aware of the signs of breast cancer. These can appear as a lump or thickening in breast tissue, changes to the skin covering your breast including dimpling, puckering, redness or scaling, changes in the nipples such as redness, scaling, the nipple turning inward and nipple discharge. If these signs occur, see your health care provider right away. Men can have diagnostic studies, including mammograms, ultrasounds and biopsy, just as women do. There are men who have had lumpectomies, mastectomies, chemotherapy and radiation. They can have genetic markers for breast cancer in their families, which put them at higher risk. As with women, early detection is critical. Men should have annual breast tissue exams as part of their physicals.

I know that I have covered a lot today. If you have questions, talk to your health care provider. When searching the WEB for health information, please remember that there is a lot of inaccurate information on the "world wide web". For reliable information go to websites such as familydoc.org and mayoclinic.com or, the websites listed below.

For more information on vaccines and male breast cancer go to the following reputable websites: <http://www.cdc.gov>, [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

As always, I look forward to your questions and feedback. To contact me, email: [health@the-independent.net](mailto:health@the-independent.net).

## Columbia Co. flu shot clinics set

Columbia Health District-Public Health Authority will be providing walk-in flu shot clinics on October 22 and 29 from 9 a.m.-noon and 2-4:00 p.m. Vaccinations will cost \$10 this year. Oregon Health Plan (OHP) will be billed in lieu of the \$10 charge for those insured by OHP. The location of the flu shot clinics is Columbia Health District-Public Health Authority, 2370 Gable Road, St. Helens, which is behind Safeway and across the street from St. Helens High School.

Flu vaccine is an effective way to protect you and your family from the flu virus. For those who have private insurance or Medicare, contact your provider or pharmacist.

Seasonal and H1N1 vaccines are combined in one shot this year and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advises everyone 6 months and older to get the flu shot. For the most current information about flu, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention site [www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu). For information about where to get flu

shots: [www.flu.oregon.gov](http://www.flu.oregon.gov)  
800-978-3040.

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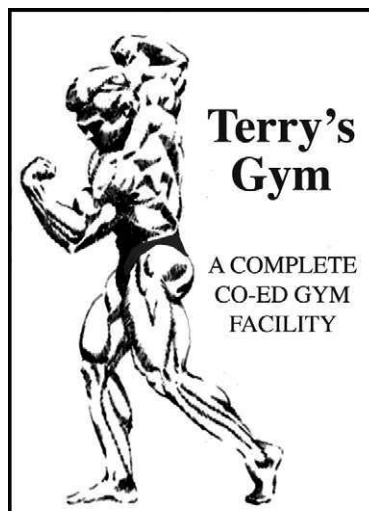
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