

Taking Advantage of the Home Renovation Tax Credit this summer? Build a tetanus booster into your plans!

*~Canadian Coalition for Immunization Awareness and Promotion
hammers home importance of tetanus immunization before starting gardening and
outdoor home improvement projects~*

May 11, 2009 (OTTAWA, ON) – Planning on getting your hands dirty with gardening and outdoor renovations this May long weekend? With summer just around the corner, and the added incentive of the federal Home Renovation Tax Credit, many Canadians will be heading to their local home and garden centre this long weekend to get home improvement projects underway. But those who have not had a tetanus booster in the last 10 years could be putting themselves at risk of contracting this rare but serious disease through a cut or puncture while working on their home or garden. The bacteria that cause tetanus live in soil, dirt and dust, and even a small amount can lead to illness if you are not protected.

To help people feel confident and protected this May long weekend or anytime they are doing gardening and home improvement projects, the Canadian Coalition for Immunization Awareness & Promotion (CCIAP) is calling on all Canadians to check their immunization records, and to visit their doctor or local clinic if they are due for a booster.

“Although most of us understand the importance of tetanus immunization, many people still don’t realize that a booster dose is needed every 10 years to keep their protection up,” said Dr. Bonnie Henry, Chair of CCIAP. “Unlike other vaccine-preventable diseases, tetanus is not passed from person to person. This means every single person needs to be immunized in order to be protected. The tetanus booster is safe, effective, and free for all Canadians; so everyone has the opportunity to protect themselves.”

“It’s important to be informed, ask questions and keep an immunization record. Be proactive and ensure you stay protected over the long term,” said Dr. Susan Bowles, Vice Chair of CCIAP. “May is a great time for you to check your immunization records and to visit your doctor or local public health clinic if you’re due for a booster – especially if you’re starting home renovation projects or doing some gardening. Why wait until you have an injury to get immunized?”

DRILLING DOWN - THE FACTS ON TETANUS

Tetanus is an illness caused by a toxin (or poison) made by bacteria that block normal control of nerve reflexes in the spinal column. The bacteria that make tetanus toxin are found naturally in soil, animal feces and dust. Home improvement and gardening tools and equipment may be exposed to tetanus bacteria if they are used outdoors or stored near other supplies that are used outdoors. Tetanus bacteria usually enter the body through an open wound in the skin, such as the kind you can get by cutting yourself on sharp gardening tools or jagged objects buried in the dirt. Although many people associate tetanus with a cut from a rusty nail, you can get tetanus from many things including anything contaminated with even small amounts of animal feces, soil and dust. A significant portion of tetanus cases are caused by minor injuries people may not think would cause tetanus – 27 per cent of tetanus cases in North America occur in people who have not previously reported an injury.

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ROLL UP YOUR SLEEVES AND PROTECT YOURSELF

Canadians should receive a tetanus booster every 10 years. Adults more than 60 years of age are at increased risk of tetanus infection as they may not have been immunized against the disease when they were younger, or they may have simply forgotten to keep their immunization up to date with a booster every 10 years. If you're not up to date, visit your doctor or local public health clinic and ask for a free tetanus booster. Immigrants to Canada may also be at risk, as many would not have received tetanus immunization in their country of origin. They should check whether they need to receive full immunization against tetanus.

To avoid contracting tetanus during home renovations, or in the garden or other outdoor locations, follow these easy steps:

1. Ensure that your immunization is up to date
2. Get a tetanus booster every 10 years at your local public health clinic, doctor's office, pharmacy or travel clinic
3. Wear gloves, protective clothing and footwear while renovating, gardening or doing yard work
4. Be careful when using tools that could cut or puncture your skin
5. If you are injured, clean wounds thoroughly and immediately with soap and warm water

ABOUT THE CANADIAN COALITION FOR IMMUNIZATION AWARENESS & PROMOTION

The Canadian Coalition for Immunization Awareness & Promotion is a coalition of 28 national organizations. Its mission is to contribute to the control, elimination and eradication of vaccine-preventable diseases in Canada by increasing awareness of the benefits and risks of immunization for all ages via education, promotion, advocacy and media relations.

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For more information, please contact your local public health office, visit the CCIAP web site at www.immunize.ca, which includes an adult immunization guide, or contact:

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