

Immunization Prevents Most Tetanus Deaths

By K. H. SUTHERLAND, M.D., County Health Officer

For more than 2,000 years tetanus has been considered a terrifying disease, and the dread that its appearance never failed to occasion is repeated with each case that occurs today. But, though tetanus can be prevented with an almost 100 per cent certainty through immunization, some 400 cases of the disease are reported in the United States each year. An estimated 60 per cent of these cases end in death.

So far this year, three cases of tetanus have been reported in Los Angeles County, and two of the three persons involved failed to recover. The most recent case, a four-year-old boy, died at the County General Hospital on March 23.

This dangerous disease of the nervous system may occur when tetanus bacilli gain entry into the body through broken skin. Though the disease occurs with greater frequency after deep, contaminated puncture wounds or some other

serious injury, it may also occur in the wake of relatively minor mishaps such as a deep prick, a blister, burn, abrasion, or even an insect bite.

THOUGH comparatively rare, tetanus of the newborn (tetanus neonatorum) is not unknown in this country. It generally follows contamination of the unhealed navel with the tetanus organisms. In certain countries where improperly trained midwives take care of new mothers and infants, tetanus neonatorum presents a serious problem.

Tetanus bacilli are anaerobic, which means that they can grow and produce toxin only in the absence of air. No matter how trivial the wound, if it is contaminated with the tetanus germs and becomes airtight, the disease will develop. When in the presence of air, the organisms are quite harmless.

The tetanus germs are found in the soil just about everywhere. Since they normally inhabit the intestines of plant

eating animals, they are particularly prevalent in those areas where such animals are found, and also in places where manure is used as fertilizer. The germs are also present in the dirt on city streets, in dust and rust, and in homes. They have even been found in hospitals—carried in on shoes, clothing or skin.

SINCE THERE is so little that the best medical center can do for the tetanus victim, and since there is no stopping the disease once it gets started, the immunization of every man, woman, and child with tetanus toxoid is of the greatest importance.

Tetanus toxoid is administered in two injections given 4 or 5 weeks apart. This is followed by a booster within a year and a booster about every 5 years thereafter. Should injury occur, another dose is administered in order to stimulate production of protective substances within the body. The immunization schedule dif-

fers slightly in the case of children.

When the unimmunized person needs tetanus prophylaxis, tetanus antitoxin must be given. This confers a quick but brief immunity as opposed to tetanus toxoid which takes a while to build up a good protection against the disease. Some 20 to 30 percent of persons are allergic to the horse serum antitoxin preparation, however, and there is always the danger that the reaction will be as bad as the disease. The physician has little choice in these situations and the same is true if the person is unconscious and cannot be questioned.

A **BOVINE** antitoxin preparation is available, but individuals allergic to the horse serum product seem more likely to get a reaction to the bovine serum preparation as well. Tetanus antitoxin prepared from human serum is now available, and no serious reaction has yet been reported following its use. Un-

fortunately, human globulin is usually in short supply.

Tetanus toxoid is an invaluable protection against a disease that one physician rightly called an "inhuman calamity." Practically all of the 256 tetanus deaths that occurred in the United States last year were avoidable. Admittedly, the chances of getting the disease are slim, but so are the chances of recovery.

A pamphlet giving additional information on tetanus will be mailed to anyone who sends a card of request to the Health Education Division, Los Angeles County Health Department, 241 N. Figueroa St., Los Angeles 90012.

Vets Officer Provides Aid In Local Area

Veterans in Torrance were advised this week they may secure information or assistance regarding veterans benefits from the County Veterans Service Officer.

County officer Arthur H. Tryon said such assistance is available at either the Long Beach or the Los Angeles offices.

In addition, a veterans officer is in Torrance and Inglewood each week. The Torrance office is open Thursday afternoons at the municipal court building.

Harbor Chamber Slates Meeting

The Harbor District Chamber of Commerce will meet in the Community Savings and Loan Building, 3901 Atlantic Blvd., North Long Beach, on April 9, at 7:30 p.m.



PLANNING DRIVE . . . Three Lomita women, (L to R) Mrs. Richard Bagio, residential section chairman; Mrs. Lee Hill, residential section chairman; and Mrs. Bobby Jo Henson, residential unit chairman, prepare for the American Cancer Society's April Crusade. The three will coordinate the Society's crusade in the Lomita area, where thousands of pieces of educational literature will be distributed.

Glendale Savings Opens New Office in Lakewood Center

A new branch office of Glendale Federal Savings and Loan Assn. was opened yesterday in Downey. The new facility is located in the Stonewood Center at Lakewood and Firestone boulevards.

The new office will offer complete escrow service, a new sit-down area for new accounts, and regular savings and loan accounts.

Glendale Federal currently has offices in Torrance, Long Beach, Arcadia, Canoga Park, El Monte, Fullerton, Glendale, Montrose, Pacific Palisades, San Pedro, Sherman Oaks, Studio City, and Westwood Village.

Normandie Improvement Authorized

Improvements on Normandie Avenue between 212th and Carson streets were authorized this week and a contract was awarded to H. E. Baker Construction Co.

The contract, valued at \$16,865, calls for the upgrading of Normandie Avenue to a four-lane, fully-curbed highway in the area.

During construction, a 12-foot lane will remain open in each direction. Completion of the project will facilitate the flow of traffic around Harbor General Hospital.

Saxon Senior Nominated to Service School

Ronald Fleetwood, a senior at North High School, has been nominated to the U. S. Air Force Academy by Congressman Cecil R. King of the 17th district.

Fleetwood, son of Mr. and Mrs. T. D. Fleetwood, will be notified of the results of his tests sometime in May.



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