



NEWS



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Cases of Pertussis (Whooping Cough) Reported in McLean County

McLean County Health Department is monitoring disease activity

BLOOMINGTON – Pertussis, also known as Whooping Cough, is being reported in McLean County, prompting the McLean County Health Department to encourage residents to take preventative steps to avoid infection with the disease. Currently, there are six confirmed cases in the county with those affected ranging in age from 1 month to 21 years old.

Pertussis is spread from person-to-person by droplet or direct contact with airborne respiratory secretions – most often produced by coughs or sneezes. Symptoms of the disease usually develop within 5 to 10 days after being exposed to it, but it can sometimes take up to 3 weeks. Without prompt antibiotic treatment, infected people can remain contagious for up to about two weeks after the cough begins. Early treatment can reduce the contagious period to as little as five (5) days.

Pertussis is not life-threatening to most healthy pre-teens, teens and adults; however, an infected person can expose those at high risk of serious complications -- infants, very young children, and children with chronic illnesses -- to the disease. Pertussis is generally treated with antibiotics. Early treatment is very important because it can make the infection less severe. Left untreated coughing episodes can last for up to 10 weeks, with infected individuals being symptom-free in between episodes.

Infants receive the vaccine that protects against pertussis as part of the birth through 6 years immunization schedule, but this protection starts to wane after five to 10 years. Pre-teens, teenagers and adults are especially susceptible if they have not received a booster shot. Anyone uncertain of whether their pre-teen or teenager received the pertussis booster shot, Tdap, should contact the child's healthcare provider.

Preventative steps to help avoid further spread of pertussis (whooping cough) :

1. The best way to prevent whooping cough is to get vaccinated. Both whooping cough vaccines (DTaP and Tdap) protect against 3 diseases: diphtheria, tetanus, and whooping cough. Check immunization records for all family members and make sure everyone is up-to-date on their pertussis vaccinations - DTaP for babies and young children and Tdap for preteens, teens, pregnant women, and adults.

- ✓ Children need to get a DTaP shot at 2, 4, and 6 months old to build a high level of protection against whooping cough.
- ✓ DTaP booster shots are needed at 15 through 18 months and 4 through 6 years old to help maintain protection.
- ✓ Preteens should get Tdap at 11 or 12 years old. Teens who didn't get Tdap as a preteen should get one dose the next time they visit their doctor.
- ✓ All adults who didn't get Tdap as a preteen or teen should get one dose of Tdap.
- ✓ Pregnant women should get Tdap during each pregnancy, preferably in their 3rd trimester, to provide short-term protection to their baby in early life.

2. Practicing healthy hygiene habits is always recommended to prevent getting or spreading respiratory illnesses.

- ✓ Avoid anyone who has cold symptoms or is coughing, as much as possible
- ✓ Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and put your used tissue in the waste basket, then wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- ✓ Cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow, not your hands, if you don't have a tissue
- ✓ Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand rub if soap and water are not available

Individuals with the persistent cough characteristic of pertussis should seek care from a physician and stay home from school or work until a physician has made an alternative diagnosis. Individuals with a confirmed case of pertussis should stay home until they have received five days of proper antibiotic treatment. Close contacts of these confirmed cases should receive preventive antibiotic treatment as well.

The McLean County Health Department is working together with partners in the community to help prevent the spread of pertussis. Anyone 19 years of age or older who is unsure if they have had their Tdap booster is encouraged to contact their primary care physician. The clinical staff at the McLean County Health Department is also available to answer questions regarding pertussis immunizations and can be reached at 309-888-5435. Parents with babies and children needing to complete the DTaP vaccination series should contact their child's healthcare provider, or call the health department children's immunization clinic at (309) 888-5455 for an appointment. The McLean County Health Department accepts both private and public health insurance.

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