

# Health Unit Media Release

July 6, 2012



## Check your immunizations - Whooping cough advisory

Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit has been monitoring a few sporadic cases of whooping cough in the region. South and Central Ontario is experiencing an ongoing outbreak of whooping cough (pertussis). **The cases in our region are not believed to be part of the south and central Ontario outbreak.**

**At this point, the Health Unit is recommending to:**

- Ensure pertussis immunization for children and teens is up to date
- Get a booster dose for pertussis for all adults
- Wash hands or use alcohol based hand rub frequently
- Cover your cough using a tissue or sleeve
- Keep frequently touched surfaces clean
- Stay home when you are sick

### What is whooping cough?

Whooping cough is caused by *Bordetella pertussis* bacteria. It looks a lot like the common cold at first — runny nose, sneezing and a mild cough or fever. **After one to two weeks, severe coughing episodes can begin.** Coughing fits may be violent and can cause sharp inhalations with a distinctive “whoop” sound. Whooping cough is most severe in infants, pregnant woman and elderly. Pertussis can be treated with antibiotics and the risk for spreading the infection is much less after 5 days of antibiotics. If pertussis is not treated it can lead to pneumonia, seizure and death especially in elderly.

### How do people become infected with whooping cough?

Whooping cough is primarily spread by breathing in droplets that are sprayed into the air when an infected person sneezes, coughs, or talks. The likelihood of infecting others is greatest during the first two weeks of illness. **Adults are often the first case in a household and can be the source of infection for children.**

### How can I prevent getting whooping cough?

**Immunization is the best way to prevent whooping cough.** The vaccine is very safe and works well. The vaccine is given as part of routine immunizations to babies starting at two months of age. A booster is given at age 4 to 6 years before the child starts elementary school and then again at age 14 to 16. Over time, protection from immunization can begin to decrease. Individuals with incomplete vaccination may have milder symptoms of the disease but are still able to infect others. Recently, in Ontario, one additional lifetime dose of the whooping cough vaccine has been publicly funded for adults up to the age of 64. **All adults are recommended to receive a booster especially those having contact with infants or pregnant women.**

Contact your health care provider for more information and for pertussis vaccine. If you do not have a health care provider, contact the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit for an appointment at an immunization clinic. Locations and times are available by contacting the Health ACTION Line at 1-800-660-5853 or visit [www.healthunit.org](http://www.healthunit.org) or like us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/LGLHealthUnit](http://www.facebook.com/LGLHealthUnit) .

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