

April 4, 2017

Check your immunizations---Pertussis (Whooping cough) Advisory

The Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit has been notified of several suspect and confirmed cases of pertussis for adolescents in the region. We recommend the following:

- Ensure pertussis immunization for children and teens is up-to-date
- All adults get an additional booster dose of pertussis
- 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 Pertussis (whooping cough)?

Pertussis is caused by *Bordetella pertussis* bacteria. Symptoms usually start like a cold, with a runny nose, sneezing and a mild cough or fever. It is already contagious when these cold-like symptoms begin. **After one to two weeks, severe coughing episodes can begin** and may be followed by a distinctive “whoop” sound before the next breath. The coughing may be so aggressive that children and adults can vomit or have trouble breathing.

Is it serious?

Pertussis can be very serious for infants under one year of age. Pregnant women, especially those in their third trimester who have not received a dose of pertussis vaccine in adulthood, should speak to their health care provider. Pertussis can be treated with antibiotics and the risk of spreading the infection is much less after 5 days of taking appropriate treatment.

How does pertussis spread?

Pertussis is a very contagious disease. It spreads when an infected person talks, coughs or sneezes and the germs land in the nose or mouth of someone who is close by. The likelihood of infecting others is greatest during the first two weeks of illness. Adults and adolescents with incomplete vaccination may have milder symptoms of the disease but are still able to infect infants and susceptible pregnant women.

How can I prevent getting whooping cough?

Immunization is the best way to prevent whooping cough. The vaccine is given as part of routine immunizations given to babies starting at two months of age. A booster is given at 4 to 6 years before starting elementary school and then again at age 14 to 16. All adults should receive one additional dose of pertussis vaccine, especially those who have contact with infants or pregnant women.

Contact your health care provider for more information and for pertussis vaccine or call and make an appointment at one of our Health Unit Immunization Clinics. Visit www.healthunit.org for locations and times of these clinics. For more information, contact the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit at 1-800-660-5853 or 613 345-5685 or 613 283-2740. You can also connect with us on Facebook and Twitter.