

DATE: February 8, 2017 **END DATE:** March 6, 2017
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RE: Pertussis

The Genesee County Health Department (GCHD) would like to remind county residents of the importance of immunizations and the role they play in ensuring public health. The State of Michigan is reporting an increase in pertussis, also known as whooping cough. Pertussis is a vaccine preventable disease that can be a very serious or even fatal illness. At most risk are infants and the very young who have not been fully immunized against pertussis. Adults, who usually have more mild symptoms, can easily spread the disease to those who are most vulnerable.

Pertussis, caused by the bacterium *Bordetella pertussis*, can be spread through sneezing and coughing. The time between exposure to the bacteria and disease symptoms is usually between 7 - 10 days, but in rare cases it can take as long as 3 weeks.

“In the early stage of illness, pertussis can resemble a common cold. Symptoms include sneezing, runny nose, mild dry cough and low-grade fever. The disease is most contagious at this time,” stated Genesee County Health Department Medical Director, Dr. Gary Johnson. After about 1 to 2 weeks, more serious “coughing spells” develop that can last for more than a minute and result in difficulty breathing. At the end of a coughing spell, the individual may make a high pitched “whooping” sound as they try to catch their breath. Sometimes the coughing will cause vomiting.

Pertussis vaccines are recommended for infants, children, adolescents, and adults. The majority of children have been protected against pertussis through their routine childhood DTaP vaccine. However, protection from the vaccine tends to fade over time and individuals over 10 years old should receive a Tdap vaccine if they haven't already had one. Talk to a healthcare professional about getting vaccinated against pertussis.

Pertussis can be treated or even prevented with antibiotics if detected early or before the disease has started. If you or any member of your family is exhibiting symptoms similar to those mentioned above please contact your personal physician immediately for testing and possible treatment. If the family member exhibiting symptoms is of school age, please keep them home and inform the school of the possible illness so they can take the necessary precautions.

The GCHD wants to remind everyone that the best way to prevent pertussis is to get vaccinated. If you have come into contact with a confirmed case of pertussis it is important for you to contact your physician for possible, preventative treatment. Fact sheets, immunization office hours at the Health Department's Burton Clinic, and additional information can be found at www.gchd.us. For more resources and information please visit www.cdc.gov/pertussis.

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