



PREVENT. PROMOTE. PROTECT.

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Pertussis Cases On Rise in Hamilton County

Hamilton County, OH.....Pertussis, also known as “Whooping Cough” cases are on the rise in Hamilton County, mirroring regional and national statistics.

“Last year, we recorded 140 pertussis cases in the County,” according to Ted Folger, Hamilton County Public Health Director of Epidemiology. “So far this year, we’ve seen 60 cases, with two-thirds of those cases occurring since May.”

Pertussis is a highly-contagious respiratory disease. The disease usually starts with cold-like symptoms and maybe a mild cough or fever. After one-two weeks, severe coughing can begin. Unlike the common cold, pertussis can become a series of coughing fits that continues for weeks.

In infants, the cough can be minimal or not even there. Infants may have a symptom known as "apnea," or a pause in the child's breathing pattern. Pertussis is

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most dangerous for babies. More than half of infants younger than one year of age who get the disease must be hospitalized.

Pertussis can cause violent and rapid coughing, over and over, until the air is gone from the lungs and you are forced to inhale with a loud "whooping" sound. This extreme coughing can cause you to throw up and be very tired. The "whoop" is often not there and the infection is generally milder (less severe) in teens and adults, especially those who have been vaccinated.

Early symptoms can last for one-two weeks and usually include:

- Runny nose
- Low-grade fever (generally minimal throughout the course of the disease)
- Mild, occasional cough
- Apnea — a pause in breathing (in infants)

Because pertussis in its early stages appears to be nothing more than the common cold, it is often not suspected or diagnosed until the more severe symptoms appear. Infected people are most contagious up to about two weeks after the cough begins. Antibiotics may shorten the amount of time someone is contagious.

As the disease progresses, the traditional symptoms of pertussis appear and include:

- Paroxysms (fits) of many, rapid coughs followed by a high-pitched "whoop"
- Vomiting (throwing up)
- Exhaustion (very tired) after coughing fits

The coughing fits can go on for up to 10 weeks or more. In China, pertussis is known as the "100 day cough."

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Although you are often exhausted after a coughing fit, you usually appear fairly well in-between. Coughing fits generally become more common and severe as the illness continues, and can occur more often at night. The illness can be milder (less severe) and the typical "whoop" absent in children, teens and adults who have been vaccinated with a pertussis vaccine.

Recovery from pertussis can happen slowly. The cough becomes less severe and less common. However, coughing fits can return with other respiratory infections for many months after pertussis started.

The best prevention for pertussis is vaccination. Children should get five doses of DTaP, which is a combined vaccine for pertussis, tetanus and diphtheria, at two, four, six and 15-18 months.

Adolescents 11-18 years of age (preferably at 11-12) and adults 19-64 should receive a single dose of Tdap, a "booster." Adults 65 and older who have close contact with an infant and have not previously received Tdap should receive one dose. Tdap should also be given to seven-10 year olds who are not fully immunized against pertussis.

Children under age 19 may receive their DTaP vaccines at Hamilton County Public Health immunization clinics. Expectant and new parents, their family members and those who provide care for infants may also receive the Tdap booster at the clinics.

The above guidelines have been established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. However, it is important to consult with your physician to discuss complete immunization programs.

"Pertussis is particularly disturbing to public health officials because it is so preventable through vaccination," Folger says. "The disease can be so devastating to infants and very young children and it just doesn't have to be. We are urging Hamilton

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County residents to talk to their doctors about immunization and make sure vaccinations are up-to-date.”

For more information or for vaccination clinic information, visit www.hamiltoncountyhealth.org or call the Hamilton County Public Health Nursing Division at 513-946-7882.

Hamilton County Public Health works to assure the 460,000 citizens living outside the cities of Cincinnati, Norwood, Sharonville and Springdale are safe from disease, injury and contamination.

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