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(Neb.)-Five Cases Of Whooping Cough Reported In The Panhandle

By: Roxie Graham-Marski Posted at: 09/02/2013 09:19 AM



(PANHANDLE)-In the last three weeks, the Panhandle Public Health District, (PPHD) which serves Dawes, Sheridan, Sioux, Box Butte, Morrill, Banner, Garden, Kimball, Cheyenne, and Deuel counties, has noted five confirmed cases of whooping cough in the area. Whooping cough, also known as pertussis, can be a very serious illness that affects the lungs and breathing tubes, causing violent coughing. It is easily spread to other people through the air by coughing and sneezing. It is most harmful for young babies and can be deadly.

Pertussis may start with a runny or stuffed-up nose, sneezing, mild cough, and a pause in breathing in babies. After one to two weeks the cough becomes worse. Children and babies can cough very hard, over and over possibly causing vomiting. When children gasp for breath after a coughing fit, they may make a "whooping" sound. Coughing can make it hard to breathe, eat, drink or sleep. Babies and young children may turn blue while coughing from lack of oxygen.

Coughs due to pertussis in adults and adolescents may be difficult to distinguish from colds or influenza. Typically, coughs due to colds or influenza improve within two weeks. Coughs due to pertussis persist for weeks or months, occurring in sudden coughing episodes. Therefore, persons with a chronic cough, with either sudden coughing episodes and/or vomiting, should be evaluated by a physician. If you or your children have these signs, check with your family doctor and get tested.

The good news is that the illness can be treated with antibiotics. "When cases of pertussis are found, PPHD works closely with local medical providers to identify close contacts who may have been exposed to the illness," said Becky Corman, a public health nurse for PPHD. "If you or your child has been close to someone who has pertussis, we may ask you to talk with your doctor. You or your family may be given antibiotics to be sure you do not become sick too—this is true even if you and your family have been vaccinated."

Vaccines are the best tool for prevention. If you have children in your household, it is important that you make sure they are up-to-date on their pertussis vaccination. The primary pertussis vaccination is usually given at two, four, six, and 15-18 months and a booster at 4-6 years. The immunity from vaccination wanes over time, so nearly all adolescents and adults are susceptible to pertussis. Two pertussis vaccines have been approved for adolescents and adults. These vaccines are included in the tetanus booster. The recommendation is to use this booster one time to replace the tetanus booster given every 10 years. Because pertussis is so harmful in babies, everyone around them needs to be vaccinated to create a circle of protection.

For further information on pertussis, visit www.pphd.org or call 308-487-3600, ext. 106 or toll-free 866-701-7173. Panhandle Public Health District is working together to improve the health, safety and quality of life for all who live, learn, work and play in the Panhandle. Our vision is that we are a healthier and safer Panhandle Community.

--Panhandle Public Health District