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(Neb.)-Whooping Cough Confirmed In Region, Vaccinations Available

By: Roxie Graham-Marski Posted at: 10/22/2013 10:01 AM



(SCOTTSBLUFF)-Is your family immunized against whooping cough? Do you or your teenaged children need a booster shot? The Scotts Bluff County Health Department has reported five confirmed cases of whooping cough in the region. Test results are pending on several additional suspected cases of the bacterial disease. Regional West Health Services in Scottsbluff says a person with whooping cough is highly infectious during the first few days of the illness, when they seem to only have a cold.

Whooping cough, also known as pertussis, is a serious respiratory illness that 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 to the point of vomiting and physical exhaustion. It is most harmful to babies and small children and can even be fatal for babies.

The term "whooping" cough comes from the sound made by children as they gasp for breath after a coughing fit. Older children and adults can have the illness and cough without the whooping sound.

Typically, coughs due to colds or influenza improve within two weeks, but coughs due to pertussis persist for weeks or months, occurring in sudden coughing episodes.

Whooping cough can be easily spread through the air by coughing and sneezing. Regional West says vaccines are the best tool for prevention. The primary pertussis vaccination is usually given at two months, four months, six months, 15-18 months, and a booster at 4-6 years. Nearly all adolescents and adults require a pertussis booster vaccination, as immunity decreases over time.

Vaccinations for whooping cough are available from primary care physicians and healthcare providers, and from the Regional West Community Health department.

For more information, or to schedule a vaccination appointment, call Regional West at 308-630-1126.

--Regional West Health Services