



Allen County Health Department

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Public Health
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N E W S

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Pertussis (Whooping Cough) Cases in Allen County

LIMA – The Allen County Health Department has received reports of five cases of laboratory-confirmed pertussis (also known as whooping cough) and is investigating one suspected case. The Health Department is currently identifying persons who might have been exposed and is notifying them by phone. Pertussis is a highly contagious bacterial infection of the respiratory system that can cause episodes of severe cough. Since the 1980s, there's been a dramatic increase in the number of cases of pertussis in the U.S., especially among teens (10–19 years of age) and babies less than 5 months of age.

Pertussis can spread through the air from a sick person during talking, sneezing, or coughing. Pertussis can be a very serious disease, particularly for infants less than one year of age. Early symptoms of pertussis are similar to the common cold—mild fever, runny nose, and cough. Symptoms can progress to severe, persistent coughing episodes. Many infants who get pertussis are infected by older siblings or parents who might not even know they have the disease. Parents are urged to check their children's immunization records to be sure they have received all of the recommended doses because immunization is the most effective way to prevent pertussis.

Although most babies and young children receive pertussis vaccinations when they enter school, the protection from the vaccine begins to wear off five to 10 years after the last shot. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that adolescents ages 11-18 receive a single booster dose of the tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis vaccination. If parents are not sure if their children are completely immunized, they should contact their family doctor or the Allen County Health Department. The CDC also recommends that adults aged 19-64 receive a booster dose as well.

These every day actions help to prevent illness:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hands cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread that way.
- **Stay home if you are sick.**

More information is available on the Health Department website, www.allencountyhealthdepartment.org and information can also be found on the CDC website: <http://www.cdc.gov/Features/Pertussis/>

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