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N E W S

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Continuing Pertussis (Whooping Cough) Cases in Allen County is a Concern for Coming School Year

LIMA – The Allen County Health Department continues to receive reports of pertussis (also known as whooping cough). The Health Department has investigated 149 cases since March (2010). Pertussis is a highly contagious bacterial infection of the respiratory system that can cause episodes of severe cough. As children head back to school, it is important for parents to make sure their children are properly immunized. One important immunization is the Tdap vaccine which protects against pertussis. Immunization is the most effective way to prevent pertussis.

Parents should also know the signs and symptoms of pertussis and what to do if they suspect their child is sick. Early symptoms of pertussis are similar to the common cold - runny nose, and cough. Symptoms can progress to severe, persistent coughing episodes. The best way for someone to find out if they have pertussis is to contact their doctor or health care provider and be tested. If people are suspected of having pertussis, the most important step they can take to reduce the spread of disease is to stay home until they have completed their treatment course. Pertussis spreads 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. Many infants who get pertussis are infected by older siblings or parents who might not even know they have the disease.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that adolescents ages 11-18 receive a single booster dose of the tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis vaccination (Tdap). 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.

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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