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MDHHS reporting an increase in pertussis, recommends vaccination

LANSING, Mich. – The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services is supporting the Oakland County Health Division following an increase in the number of identified pertussis cases, commonly referred to as whooping cough.

“Pertussis is a contagious disease that easily spreads between people and can be difficult to diagnose,” said Dr. Eden Wells, chief medical executive for the MDHHS. “We support the proactive efforts of the Oakland County Health Division in ensuring residents are aware of this increase and the steps they can take to protect themselves and their children.”

Anyone exposed to pertussis and displaying symptoms should be evaluated by a doctor to determine if antibiotics are needed. Infants younger than 12 months are at greatest risk. Infants and children who have not been fully vaccinated against pertussis are at a higher risk of developing severe illness. To be fully immunized, doses are given at 2, 4, 6, and 15 months. The last dose is given at 4 years old.

Pertussis is a very contagious disease that usually starts with cold-like symptoms and maybe a mild cough or fever. After 1 to 2 weeks, severe coughing can begin. Pertussis can cause violent and rapid coughing, over and over, until the air is gone from the lungs and people are forced to inhale with a loud "whooping" sound. In infants, the cough can be minimal or not even there. Other symptoms include:

- Runny nose
- Nasal congestion
- Sneezing
- Red, watery eyes
- Mild fever
- Dry cough
- Vomiting after coughing fits

People infected with pertussis can spread the disease by coughing or sneezing in close contact with others who breathe in the bacteria. Pertussis is most contagious during the first two weeks of illness. Infants are at highest risk of severe disease and death; older siblings and adults often are the source.

Infants and children should receive pertussis vaccine series (DTaP) as per the U.S. recommended childhood immunization schedule. All doses should be given as close to the recommended ages as possible. A pertussis vaccine booster dose (Tdap) is recommended for adolescents and adults, and is especially important for those in contact with infants. Current recommendations call for a single lifetime Tdap booster dose with the following exception: a dose of Tdap is recommended for pregnant females in each pregnancy between weeks 27 and 36.

For more information about pertussis, visit www.cdc.gov/pertussis.

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