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Whooping Cough Notice

Date: January 10, 2020

The Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH) wants you to know that a 3rd grade student at the Washington Elementary School in Park Ridge, IL was recently diagnosed with pertussis.

There are specific steps outlined here that you can take to prevent the spread of this disease.

What is Pertussis?

Pertussis, or Whooping Cough, is a highly contagious bacterial infection. This disease only infects humans.

How is Pertussis spread?

Pertussis is spread through coughing and sneezing. Adults, who often have less severe symptoms, may not realize that they have the infection, and can spread it to others.

What are the Symptoms of Pertussis?

Pertussis is very serious in young children. Adults and adolescents usually have milder symptoms without the characteristic "whoop," but can spread the disease to others. Symptoms usually appear 5-10 days after exposure, but can take as long as 21 days.

The first symptoms are similar to those of a common cold: a runny nose, sneezing, low-grade fever and a mild, occasional cough. The symptoms may progress to severe coughing fits particularly at night, with "whooping" (primarily in children), and vomiting after coughing. The cough associated with pertussis usually lasts several weeks.

How do I protect myself against Pertussis?

Every child should receive doses of the pertussis vaccine at 2, 4, 6, and 15 months and then a booster at 4-6 years of age.

These early childhood pertussis vaccines provide protection when children are most susceptible to serious illness, but immunity begins to wane three to five years after the last shot. Protection can be completely gone by the time a child enters middle school.

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Preteens going to the doctor for their regular check-up at age 11 or 12 years should get a dose of Tdap, a booster for tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis. Teens who did not get this vaccine at the 11- or 12-year-old check-up should get vaccinated at their next visit. Being up-to-date with Tdap is especially important for preteens and teens who will be around babies.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention have expanded the recommendations to include children 7-10 years old who are not fully vaccinated with DTaP, adults 65 years and older who are close contact with young infants and healthcare workers. Pregnant women also should receive a dose of Tdap during each pregnancy between 27-36 weeks of gestation. Persons mentioned above should receive this vaccination to prevent infection with pertussis. Contact your regular healthcare provider for more information.

How is Pertussis treated?

Pertussis is treated with antibiotics. People who come into close contact (family members and close friends) with someone suffering from pertussis should receive antibiotics to prevent infection, particularly if they come into contact with children less than 1 year of age. A person diagnosed with pertussis should remain at home during his or her treatment with antibiotics. Once the person finishes the antibiotic treatment, he or she can return back to school or work and can also resume their extracurricular activities.

How do I report cases?

Medical providers are urged to test symptomatic individuals for pertussis if they suspect infection and report possible cases within 24 hours to the Cook County Department of Public Health at 708-836-8699. For more information log on to: www.cookcountypublichealth.org.