



December 6, 2011

A case of Pertussis has been reported to the Ozaukee County Public Health Department in a child who attends Homestead High School.

Pertussis (Whooping Cough) is a contagious bacterial disease that affects the respiratory tract. It is spread by contact with the respiratory droplets from an infected person through coughing. Exposure usually occurs after repeated indoor face-to-face contact. Household spread is common.

Pertussis can infect persons of all ages, but is most serious in infants and young children. In children, the disease begins much like a cold with a runny nose, possible low grade fever and a mild but irritating cough. The illness progresses to spells of explosive coughing that can interrupt breathing, eating and sleeping and is commonly followed by vomiting and exhaustion. The child may make a loud crowing or “whooping” sound as they struggle to inhale air (hence the common name “whooping cough”). The severe coughing spells can last for several weeks to two months or longer. In older children, adolescents and adults the symptoms are often milder and without the typical whoop. However, the disease can be serious at any age.

The incubation period for pertussis is usually 7-20 days. It is contagious from the early stage of the illness, before the onset of the explosive coughing spells, and may continue for up to three weeks after onset of symptoms. The contagious period can be reduced to 5 days with the use of appropriate antibiotic therapy.

If you come down with symptoms that include a cough, contact your health care provider. Tell them that you may have been exposed to pertussis. **If you develops symptoms suggestive of pertussis, please stay at home with no attendance at work, school, or social activities until pertussis has been ruled out or you have completed 5 days of antibiotic treatment.**

Immunization for pertussis is recommended for children ages 2 months through 6 years of age. It is included in the initial DTaP series that most children receive. It is also included in the routine tetanus booster (Tdap) that is now being used with adolescents and adults.

If you have any questions, please contact your doctor or the Ozaukee County Public Health Department at 262-238-8170 (metro) or 262-284-8170 (Port Washington).

