



# **District Health Department #10**

*Strong Communities Through Healthy People*

*Serving the Counties of Crawford, Kalkaska, Lake, Manistee, Mason, Mecosta, Missaukee, Newaygo, Oceana, and Wexford*

Website: [www.dhd10.org](http://www.dhd10.org)

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Pertussis (Whooping Cough) Infection on the Rise in Michigan**

Cadillac, MI – Currently, several states are reporting an increase in pertussis (whooping cough) cases; Michigan is one of these states, and local health officials are concerned. At the end of July 2010, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported 7,342 cases nationwide thus far this year. The CDC reported 8,295 known pertussis cases for all of 2009.

Michigan health officials first noted an increase in pertussis at the end of 2008, which continued throughout 2009, and to date into 2010. As of July 27<sup>th</sup> the Michigan Department of Community Health had received reports of 512 cases, compared with 902 cases in 2009 and 315 cases for 2008. “Pertussis cases have been reported throughout Michigan,” said Dr. James Wilson, Medical Director of District Health Department #10. “Vaccination is the best way to stop the spread of pertussis in our communities.”

Pertussis (whooping cough) is a very contagious disease caused by a type of bacteria called *Bordetella pertussis*. Pertussis can be prevented with vaccination, and many children have been safely vaccinated. However, protection from the childhood vaccine fades over time. Adolescents and adults need to be revaccinated, even if they were completely vaccinated as children.

Pertussis vaccines are very safe and effective but not 100% effective. If pertussis is circulating in the community, there is still a chance that a fully vaccinated person can catch this very contagious disease. When you or your child develops a prolonged or severe cough, it may be pertussis. The best way to know for sure is to contact your doctor and ask to be tested for pertussis.

Pertussis can cause serious illness in infants, children and adults. The disease starts like the common cold, with runny nose or congestion, sneezing, and maybe mild cough or fever. But after 1–2 weeks, severe coughing begins. Infants and children with the disease cough violently and rapidly, over and over, until the air is gone from their lungs and they're forced to inhale with a loud "whooping" sound. Illness may be milder in older children and adults.

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“Pertussis is most severe for babies who are too young to be fully vaccinated,” said Dr. Wilson. More than half of infants less than 1 year of age who get the disease must be hospitalized. About 1 in 5 infants with pertussis get pneumonia, and about 1 in 100 will have convulsions and may die. Pertussis can be treated with antibiotics prescribed by your doctor, but catching it early is key. Medication started too late may not help, and even then the cough may continue for 10 weeks or more due to extensive damage to the lungs.

People with pertussis usually spread the disease by coughing or sneezing while in close contact with others, who then breathe in the pertussis bacteria. Many infants who get pertussis are infected by parents, older siblings, or other caregivers who might not even know they have the disease. Since the 1980s, there have been increases in the number of cases of pertussis, especially among teens (10–19 years of age) and babies less than 6 months of age. In 2008 there were more than 13,000 pertussis cases reported nationally, including 18 deaths.

The best way to prevent pertussis is to get vaccinated. In the US, the recommended pertussis vaccine for children is called DTaP. This is a safe and effective combination vaccine that protects against three diseases: diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis. For maximum protection, children need five DTaP shots. The first three shots are given at 2, 4, and 6 months of age. The fourth shot is given between 15 and 18 months of age, and a fifth shot is given when a child enters school, at 4–6 years of age.

Before 2005, the only booster vaccine available for adolescents and adults contained tetanus and diphtheria (called Td), and was recommended every 10 years. Today there are boosters that contain tetanus, diphtheria, *and* pertussis (called Tdap). All pre-teens at age 11 or 12 years should get a dose of Tdap. Adults should get a dose of Tdap instead of the Td booster. Pregnant women can be safely vaccinated with Tdap during any trimester. Vaccination is especially important for new mothers, caregivers, and families with young infants.

August is designated as National Immunization Awareness Month, a time when public health officials across the nation promote the importance of vaccinations, especially back-to-school immunizations for children. Beginning this school year in Michigan, Tdap will be required for all children 11-18 years of age who are changing school districts or are enrolled in 6<sup>th</sup> grade.

More information on pertussis is available at [www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/pertussis](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/pertussis), or [www.michigan.gov/immunize](http://www.michigan.gov/immunize).

Take action now by making sure you and your loved ones are up to date with vaccinations. If you already have a cough, don't spread it to others. Contact your health care provider or your local office of District Health Department #10.

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