

PERTUSSIS CASES INCREASING IN WEXFORD AND SURROUNDING COUNTIES

District Health Department #10 asking physicians to test when symptoms present

Cadillac, MI December 20, 2019 - The Communicable Disease division of District Health Department #10 (DHD#10) reports that there are seven confirmed and suspected cases of pertussis (whooping cough) in Wexford County since October 25, 2019 and several cases in surrounding counties. This number is likely to rise pending lab results and increased reports from the community.

DHD#10 has been reaching out to health care providers in Wexford County to recommend they perform appropriate testing to ensure rapid diagnosis and appropriate management, treat individuals even without lab confirmation when suspicion of whooping cough is high, and advise anyone with suspected or confirmed whooping cough to stay home until five days of antibiotic treatment has been completed.

Pertussis is a highly contagious respiratory disease caused by the bacterium *Bordetella pertussis*. It is known for uncontrollable, violent coughing which often makes it hard to breathe. Pertussis can affect people of all ages, but can be very serious, even deadly, for babies less than a year old.

“The most effective way to protect yourselves and your family against pertussis is to get the DTaP vaccine or Tdap booster” states Dr. Jennifer Morse, Medical Director for DHD#10. According to Dr. Morse, before the pertussis vaccine was available, thousands of children, primarily infants, died every year due to pertussis. Thankfully, it is now rare that an infant die. Last year 5 deaths were reported in the U.S. due to pertussis. Dr. Morse goes on to say that the current pertussis vaccine is about 70% to 90% effective but admittedly is not perfect. Fully vaccinated individuals can still get infected with pertussis. Fortunately, those that are vaccinated are less likely to have serious infection, will not have a cough that lasts as long, and will have less severe coughing fits. Protection from both the vaccine and natural pertussis illness decreases with time so it is very important that you and your family make sure you are up to date on booster shots. Everyone over the age of 10 should have at least one Tdap vaccine. It is also very important to stay home if you become ill and suspect you have pertussis until you can see a healthcare provider. This disease is very contagious and spreads quickly; if you work in close quarters, like an office or manufacturing facility, your risk of spreading or contracting pertussis are even higher.

Symptoms of pertussis usually develop within 7 to 10 of exposure, but may take as long as 21 days. Initial symptoms are much like the common cold – runny nose, low-grade fever, and mild cough. After 1 to 2 weeks, the disease progresses to include rapid coughing fits followed by a high-pitched “whoop”, as well as vomiting and exhaustion after coughing fits. This can last for 2 months or longer. Teenagers and adults, as well as those that are fully vaccinated, may not have these classic or severe symptoms. Treatment includes antibiotics for those infected as well as for those exposed to prevent the spread of the disease. Practicing good hygiene is also recommended, such as coughing or sneezing into your arm or covering your mouth and nose with a tissue



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COUNTIES SERVED:

Crawford
Kalkaska
Lake
Manistee
Mason
Mecosta
Missaukee
Newaygo
Oceana
Wexford



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when coughing or sneezing, washing your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, and using an alcohol-based hand rub if soap is not available.

About DHD #10

District Health Department #10 (DHD #10) is Michigan's largest geographical health department, mandated to promote and protect the public from unsafe and hazardous conditions and provide methods of promoting good health and disease prevention. Some of the vital programs provided by DHD #10 include Immunizations, Infectious Disease Control, STI Testing and Counseling, WIC, Maternal Infant Health Program, Healthy Families Northern Michigan, Children's Special Health Services, Hearing and Vision Screening, Family Planning, Cancer Screening, Worksite Wellness, Smoking Cessation, Substance Use Prevention, Chronic Disease Prevention, and Environmental Health Services. DHD #10 serves Crawford, Kalkaska, Lake, Manistee, Mason, Mecosta, Missaukee, Newaygo, Oceana, and Wexford counties. For more information, visit www.dhd10.org.