

NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Contact: Lisa V. Horn
Communications Coordinator
Office: (785) 856-7362

Pertussis cases on rise in Douglas County

(Lawrence, KS) – The uptick in pertussis (whooping cough) cases around the country is now being seen in Douglas County. Since the beginning of July, the Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department has investigated nine cases of the disease in both children and adults and responded by providing treatment and prevention recommendations to the ill, their possible contacts and area physicians.

Adults experience a milder form of pertussis than children. Their symptoms may be mistaken for a cold and adults may unknowingly spread the disease to others. It is strongly advised that parents (especially pregnant women), older siblings and other caregivers are immunized against the illness if they are in contact with infants 2 months old or younger. Infants at this age are too young to receive the vaccination (the first in the shot series is given at 2 months of age). If a person immunized against the disease still contracts pertussis, his or her case is usually milder than without the vaccination.

Pertussis is a contagious, bacterial, respiratory disease spread by coughing or sneezing in close contact with others. The symptoms of pertussis begin much like a common cold:

- Runny nose or congestion
- Sneezing
- Occasionally a mild cough or fever
- Infants and children with the disease may 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.

In rare cases (one out of 200), pertussis can cause death (especially in children age 1 or younger).

The Health Department offers both the DTaP and Tdap vaccines through its walk-in clinic. Some adults may be eligible to receive the pertussis vaccine at a reduced rate if they meet certain income guidelines. For hours and location, visit www.ldchealth.org/contactus.htm

If you have any questions or if you or your child is experiencing pertussis symptoms, please contact your physician or the Health Department at **(785) 843-0721** and ask for a communicable disease (CD) nurse.

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