

NEWS RELEASE

October 28, 2024

For immediate release

For more information, contact: **Emily Timm at 308-763-8042 or etimm@pphd.ne.gov**

Pertussis cases are on the rise in Nebraska and the Panhandle

There has been an increase in cases of pertussis, also known as Whooping Cough, in Nebraska and the Panhandle.

Pertussis is a highly contagious bacterial infection that affects the lungs and airways. It spreads through droplets from coughing, sneezing, or close contact with someone who is infected. While anyone can catch pertussis, some groups are at higher risk for severe illness.

Those greatest at risk include infants under 12 months of age, pregnant women, adults over age 65, people with chronic health conditions, and unvaccinated or under-vaccinated individuals.

Signs and symptoms of pertussis start like a common cold, but after 1-2 weeks, symptoms can become worse. Watch for symptoms including runny nose, cough, fever, sneezing. As the illness progresses, the cough becomes more severe and may lead to long, severe coughing fits, a “whooping” sound when breathing after a coughing fit, vomiting after coughing spells, or exhaustion after coughing fits. Infants may not make the characteristic “whoop” sound and can experience apnea, where they stop breathing for short periods.

The best way to prevent pertussis is by staying up-to-date with vaccinations. Infants should receive the DTaP vaccine in a series of doses starting at 2 months. Children should receive a booster shot at ages 4-5 years, and again at 11-12 years of age. Adults need a Tdap booster every 10 years to stay protected. Pregnant women should receive the Tdap vaccine in their third trimester of every pregnancy to help protect their baby after birth.

Along with vaccination, good hygiene can help protect yourself and others. Wash your hands often and cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing. Avoid close contact with anyone who has cold-like symptoms. Keep infants away from people who are sick and encourage family members and caregivers to be vaccinated.

If you or a family member develops severe coughing fits, especially with a whooping sound or difficulty breathing, contact your healthcare provider immediately. Early treatment with antibiotics can reduce the severity of symptoms and prevent the spread of the infection.

Panhandle Public Health District can help you stay healthy and protected by providing DTaP and Tdap vaccines to you and your family members. Walk-ins welcome or call our Scottsbluff office at (308)633-2866 to make an appointment. Panhandle Public Health District is working together to improve the health, safety and quality of life for all who live, learn, work and play in the Panhandle. Our vision is that we are a healthier and safer Panhandle community.