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# News Release

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **WHOOPING COUGH CASES CONTINUE TO RISE**

Twenty-one cases of whooping cough, also known as pertussis, within Canyon County have been reported to Southwest District Health (SWDH) since the beginning of the year. This is three times the number of whooping cough cases reported in the same period last year.

Whooping cough is a highly contagious disease that can cause serious illness in infants, children, and adults. It begins with cold-like symptoms, such as sneezing, runny nose, a mild cough, and a low-grade fever, but symptoms can vary. Typically, after 1-2 weeks, the cough becomes more severe, especially at night, and cough medicines usually do not help the cough.

Other symptoms may include:

- A long series of coughs (“coughing fits” or spasms) that can be followed by a “whooping” noise at the end of the coughing spell when they catch their breath.
- Vomiting after coughing
- Difficulty in catching a breath or long pauses in breathing.

“People with whooping cough usually spread the disease by coughing or sneezing while in close proximity with others, who then breathe in the whooping cough bacteria,” said Jennifer Tripp, Program Manager for Southwest District Health. “Most fully-immunized children are at a lower risk for contracting whooping cough, so the best way to protect against it is immunization,” she said.

Adults and adolescents are commonly the source of infection for younger children and infants. Infants under one year are not old enough to be fully-vaccinated against whooping cough and are most likely to experience severe illness if they develop the disease. Young infants should be kept away from people with cough illnesses. Likewise, people with cough illnesses should always stay away from young infants, since whooping cough can cause more severe, even life-threatening, complications in infants.

Antibiotics can make the disease milder in those infected, if treated promptly, and will prevent further transmission of the illness to others. Individuals exposed to whooping cough should also be given antibiotics to prevent the disease, even if they have been vaccinated.

**-- MORE--**

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### Who Needs Whooping Cough Vaccines?

- Kids under seven should get a series of five DTaP shots.
- Pre-teens and teens should get a whooping cough (pertussis) booster called Tdap.
- All adults are recommended to get Tdap, especially if they are in contact with infants. (parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, nannies, caregivers, childcare staff, etc.)
- All pregnant women should get the Tdap shot during each pregnancy, even if you've gotten it before.

"The whooping cough immunizations you received as a child do not provide lifetime protection. Everyone should have at least one dose of whooping cough vaccine," Tripp warned. "Be proactive and check with your doctor to make sure your family is up-to-date on their shots," she said.

Whooping cough vaccines (**DTaP** for infants/children and **Tdap** for adolescents/adults) are available at most healthcare providers and are covered by most insurance providers.

Tripp advises parents to remind your children to cover their mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, dispose of used tissues properly, and wash their hands often. Practicing good respiratory hygiene is a key to reducing the spread of any respiratory illness.

Tdap shots are available for \$10 at SWDH for uninsured and Medicare patients. To schedule an appointment at SWDH call (208) 455-5345.

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