

January 23, 2012

Pertussis (Whooping Cough) Outbreak

There are now more than 80 confirmed cases of whooping cough (pertussis) in the Fraser East Region. Fraser Health Public Health, along with local doctors and other health care providers, are working hard to stop the outbreak. Here is information that can help protect you, your family and others in your community from this potentially serious bacterial infection.

Please check your children's immunization records and ensure that pertussis immunizations are up-to-date. In addition, Chilliwack-area adults and youth who have ongoing contact with young children and who have not had a pertussis vaccine in the past 5 years should receive a pertussis booster. Pregnant women and their partners should also be vaccinated. Adults and youth living on reserve in the Chilliwack area whose last dose of pertussis vaccine was more than 5 years ago, should receive a booster. **To receive your free pertussis vaccine please attend one of the scheduled vaccine clinics in the Chilliwack community.**

Whooping cough is a very contagious infection affecting the lungs and throat. It is spread by coughing and sneezing. **Early** signs of pertussis are like those of a cold (sneezing, runny nose, a low fever and a mild cough). Over the next week or two, the cough gets worse, leading to longer spells of coughing that sometimes but not always end with a whoop or crowing sound when the person breathes in. The coughing may be so bad that it makes a person gag or throw up. This cough can last up to a month or two, and may be worse at night.

If you, or your child, develop early signs of whooping cough, it is very important to do two things:

- 1. See your doctor.** Early testing and treatment will help prevent you from spreading whooping cough to those that are at the most risk from the disease (babies less than one year of age, and pregnant women in the last 3 months of pregnancy). Early treatment, especially if started before coughing fits begin, reduces the duration and severity of illness.
- 2. If sick, stay home so that you do not infect others.** Coughing and sneezing into your shirt sleeve will help to lessen the chance of the germ spreading.

For more information about whooping cough, please contact the Chilliwack Health Unit at 604-720-4900.

More information about whooping cough is also available by calling Healthlink BC at 811.

The following reliable web resources are also recommended:

www.healthlinkbc.ca/kb/content/mini/hw65653.html

or, from BC Centre for Disease Control at:

www.bccdc.ca/dis-cond/a-z/w/WhoopingCough/default.htm