



LEWIS & CLARK CITY-COUNTY
Health Department

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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7 Cases of Pertussis Confirmed Recently in Helena Area

Seven cases of pertussis, or whooping cough, have been identified in the Helena area in the past two weeks, the Lewis and Clark City-County Health Department announced Tuesday.

Most of the confirmed cases have involved teenagers. The health department is contacting people who have been exposed to the disease in an effort to keep it from spreading.

Pertussis is a serious respiratory illness that can spread through close and prolonged person-to-person contact. People with pertussis can have symptoms ranging from runny nose and intermittent cough to severe uncontrollable coughing that can last for months.

Pertussis is common in the United States, and there are frequent outbreaks, but it can cause serious illness and can even be life-threatening, especially in infants.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend using antibiotics to treat those in close, prolonged contact with someone who is sick with pertussis. Antibiotics work best when given early in the course of the disease.

“Another way to help protect our community is to get vaccinated,” said Karen Dobson Wandel, public health nurse supervisor at the health department. “Fifth and sixth graders who haven’t had their pertussis booster yet should get it now. Adults, especially those who live and work with infants, should be sure they’re up to date. Protection from the regular series of childhood shots wanes over time.”

Women also should be vaccinated during each pregnancy. The best time is during the 27th through 36th week, according to the CDC. Some of the protective antibodies in the vaccine will be passed to the infant, giving it short-term protection against pertussis until it’s old enough to be vaccinated itself.

The health department offers tetanus boosters that contain pertussis during regular walk-in immunization clinics Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at 1930 Ninth Ave. However, there will be no immunization clinic on Wednesday, April 23, due to staff training.

For more information, contact your health-care provider or the Lewis and Clark City-County Health Department, 443-2584, or visit the CDC website at www.cdc.gov/pertussis