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Whooping Cough Diagnosed in Gratiot County

ITHACA~ The Mid-Michigan District Health Department has confirmed the presence of whooping cough within the Alma Public School District. Investigation into the origin of the cases suggests that the current outbreak of whooping cough started before the recent holidays.

Whooping cough is a contagious respiratory illness that starts like a cold with a runny nose and sore throat. After 7 – 10 days the cold turns into a cough that gradually worsens. The cough will last up to two months.

The incidence of whooping cough had declined dramatically with the introduction of the whooping cough vaccine. However, whooping cough outbreaks have grown in number in recent years.

“Whooping cough used to be a disease of infancy,” said Dr. Robert Graham, Medical Director of the Mid- and Central Michigan District Health Departments. “Recently we have seen more and more cases in adolescents and adults,” Graham added.

People with a persistent cough or people living with a person with a cough should contact their family doctor. “If treated early the duration and severity of symptoms can be reduced,” Graham noted.

The treatment for whooping cough is a course of antibiotics. People are usually not contagious after taking antibiotics for five days. There is also a new vaccine for adolescents and adults for the prevention of whooping cough.

Whooping cough is especially dangerous to children under one year of age. Five percent of people that develop whooping cough will develop a secondary case of bacterial pneumonia. However, twelve percent of children under the age of six months will develop bacterial pneumonia.

Parents are urged to make sure their children are up-to-date on their vaccinations.

The Mid-Michigan District Health Department, in cooperation with the Alma Public Schools, will be offering booster vaccinations for whooping cough. The clinic will be held on Wednesday, January 21, 2009 at the Alma Middle School in room 15 from 2:00 P.M. to 7:00 P.M. The main group of people that should receive the whooping cough booster is students and staff members 11 years through 64 years of age. Children that haven't had a complete series of vaccine against whooping cough should be brought up-to-date. Anyone from the general public is also invited to receive a booster dose of the whooping cough vaccine. The vaccine is being offered free of charge, although donations will be accepted.

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MMDHD also advises:

- See your family doctor if you have a cold that has lasted for more than one week
- Stay home from work or school if you are coughing
- If your doctor prescribes antibiotics for your condition take all the medication as directed
- Make sure your children are vaccinated against whooping cough
- Stop smoking, drink eight glasses of water a day, get 8 hours of sleep, and take a multiple vitamin
- Wash your hands frequently, carry a waterless hand sanitizer and use it after being in public

For more information please contact Robin Barrus, R.N., MMDHD Community Health and Education Supervisor at 989-227-3106.

Mid-Michigan District Health Department serves the residents of Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm Counties.

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