



WILLIAMSON COUNTY AND CITIES HEALTH DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Williamson County and Cities Health District Reports Increase in Pertussis (Whooping Cough) in 2009

April 13, 2009 (Williamson County) –

Thus far in 2009 forty pertussis cases have been reported in Williamson County, including five children that were hospitalized with the illness. For the same time period in 2008, only eighteen cases were reported. In all of 2008, four children were hospitalized with pertussis.

To help limit the spread of pertussis in our community, WCCHD recommends:

- Being aware of the signs and symptoms of pertussis. Pertussis begins like a cold, with a runny nose, sneezing, mild fever, and cough that slowly gets worse. After one to two weeks, the cough gets worse and usually starts to occur in strong "coughing fits." In young children, coughing fits are often followed by a whooping sound as they try to catch their breath. The cough is often worse at night, and cough medicines usually do not help reduce the cough. After coughing, a person may have difficulty catching their breath, vomit, or become blue in the face from lack of air. Between coughing spells, the person often appears to be well. Some babies may only have apnea (failure to breathe) and can die from this;
- Seeing your doctor immediately if you suspect that you or a family member has pertussis;
- Protecting newborn babies from coughing children and adults. Newborn babies are too young to be vaccinated;
- Starting childhood vaccinations on time and staying on schedule using a vaccine called DTaP, which contains diphtheria, tetanus, and acellular pertussis vaccines;
- Boosting immunity to pertussis using a vaccine for adolescents and adults called Tdap, which contains pertussis vaccine as well as tetanus and diphtheria vaccines. Boosting immunity in adolescents and adults is important because babies often get pertussis from older children and adults. Babies are more likely to experience serious complications caused by pertussis, including death.

If you (or a family member) are diagnosed with pertussis it is vital that you follow all public health instructions. These instructions will include:

- Persons diagnosed with pertussis should refrain from contact outside the home for the first 5 days of treatment with antibiotics. **Children must not return to school or daycare until after they have completed 5 days of antimicrobial treatment.**

- Persons diagnosed with pertussis and individuals identified as a contact to a pertussis case should take all medication as directed. Finish taking your medication even if you feel well. If you experience side effects from taking the medication talk to your doctor immediately about trying a different medication.

Vaccines are available at WCCHD clinics for those with no health insurance or who are underinsured for no more than \$20 depending on income.

For more information on pertussis and vaccines visit the WCCHD or CDC websites: www.wcchd.org or www.cdc.gov/. To learn more about WCCHD immunization clinic hours or other available programs visit *your public health department* at www.wcchd.org.