

## **Important Information Regarding Whooping Cough (Pertussis)**

### **Whooping Cough (Pertussis) Cases Increased in the State of Illinois**

Illinois Department of Public Health Director Dr. Damon T. Arnold is reporting that Illinois has seen an increase in the number of pertussis cases this winter. Several counties, including Lake, Cook, McHenry, Stephenson, Whiteside, Winnebago, Macon, and the City of Chicago are reporting clusters of pertussis cases in school aged children.

Pertussis, more commonly known as whooping cough, is highly contagious and is easily spread from person-to-person through coughing and sneezing. An infected person is contagious from just before the onset of symptoms and up to three weeks after symptoms start.

Whooping cough is an extremely contagious disease and symptoms are similar to those of a cold, including runny nose, sneezing, low-grade fever and a cough that gradually worsens. If the disease is diagnosed in a student, household contacts and other close contacts of the case are considered to be at high risk for contracting the disease. **Of special concern are infants less than 1 year of age and other immunocompromised persons who are considered to be at high risk for contracting severe disease, and they may be offered appropriate antibiotics as prophylaxis.**

Immunizations are the single most protective factor against pertussis.

There are four combination vaccines used to prevent diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis: DTaP, Tdap, DT, and Td. Two of these (DTaP and DT) are given to children younger than 7 years of age, and two (Tdap and Td) are given to older children and adults.

Children should get 5 doses of DTaP, one dose at each of the following ages: 2, 4, 6, and 15-18 months and 4-6 years. DT does not contain pertussis, and is used as a substitute for DTaP for children who cannot tolerate pertussis vaccine.

Td is a tetanus-diphtheria vaccine given to adolescents and adults as a booster shot every 10 years, or after an exposure to tetanus under some circumstances. Tdap is similar to Td but also containing protection against pertussis. A single dose of Tdap is recommended for adolescents 11 or 12 years of age, or in place of one Td booster in older adolescents and adults age 19 through 64.

**Additional information on whooping cough (pertussis) may be found at:**

<http://www.idph.state.il.us/public/hb/hbpertus.htm>