



WILL COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT
&
COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER

For Immediate Release

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Direct News Media Calls to Vic Reato: Media Services Manager at (815)727-5088.

HEALTH DEPARTMENT ALERT FOR PERTUSSIS CASES

JOLIET – The Will County Health Department is monitoring the local incidence of pertussis in the wake of disease activity reported across Chicagoland, and throughout the country.

Pertussis, commonly known as whooping cough, is a potentially serious and highly contagious illness transmitted through direct contact with discharges from the mouth or nose of infected persons. Anyone is susceptible, but pertussis infections tend to be more severe in infants and young children. Pneumonia and other complications are also most common in the very young. More than 35 percent of U.S. cases occur in children six months old or younger. Pertussis cases in infants often lead to hospitalization.

Small clusters of pertussis were reported from Lake, Cook and DuPage counties earlier this year. The Will County Health Department has confirmed at least 14 2008 cases, including 12 during July and August. In light of the potential for additional cases, the Health Department urges individuals to consult a physician regarding coughs that persist for more than two weeks, appear to be worse at night and sound different than a typical upper respiratory cough.

Will County Pertussis cases increased by 13 percent during 2007. There have been 45 confirmed local cases reported since 2006. Several recent high-profile disease outbreaks underscore the need for enhanced surveillance. At least 38 pertussis cases are under investigation in nearby Winnebago County. Large outbreaks are also ongoing in suburban St. Louis, Kentucky, Ohio, Nebraska and South Dakota.

Initial pertussis symptoms are similar to those of a common cold, but do not respond to over-the-counter medications. A pertussis cough gradually worsens and may last for several months. Coughing spasms can end with vomiting or the characteristic, high-pitched "Whoop." Symptoms usually appear five or 10 days after exposure, but the incubation period may be three weeks.

Persons with suspicious symptoms should stay home and consult a health care provider. Early antibiotic treatment can alleviate symptoms and reduce the potential for further disease transmission. Adolescents and adults with unrecognized, undiagnosed pertussis can often be the source of infection for small infants and children. People exhibiting cough illnesses of unknown origin should avoid contact with babies younger than six months old and pregnant women.

Since pertussis is a vaccine preventable disease, parents should make sure children receive the recommended immunization schedule. Booster immunizations for adults are also available. Adults who routinely come in contact with infants may wish to consult a health care provider about the need for a pertussis booster.

Immunization questions may be directed to the Will County Health Department Immunization Desk at (815) 740-8143.

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