



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 16, 2014

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Vaccinations Urged to Protect from Whooping Cough

GRAND RAPIDS – As the state of California declares pertussis (whooping cough) an epidemic, the Kent County Health Department urges residents to make sure they are protecting themselves and their loved ones from this highly contagious respiratory infection, which is caused by a bacteria. More than 800 cases have been reported in California in the past two weeks.

Whooping cough has been making a comeback in Michigan over the past four years. The infection causes uncontrollable, violent coughing which often makes it hard to breathe. Pertussis is called “whooping cough” because after a fit of coughing, the person often needs to take deep breathes which result in a whooping sound. The bacteria spreads through coughing and sneezing. One person can infect up to 15 people nearby, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Typically symptoms appear an average of seven to 10 days after exposure. Pertussis often affects infants and young children and can be fatal, especially in babies less than 1 year of age.

“Vaccinations are the single most effective way to prevent illness from whooping cough,” said Adam London, Health Officer of the Kent County Health Department. “Kent County has seen six reported cases so far in 2014, and a total of nine cases in 2013. We need to protect our children and families from this serious illness that can have deadly consequences.”

Infants can start receiving the DTaP vaccine at the age of 2 months old; it protects against diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis. The vaccine against pertussis for older children and adults is called Tdap. Children typically receive a Tdap dose at age 11 or 12, but if they didn’t, they should receive a Tdap booster at least once in their lifetime. Pregnant women should receive a dose of Tdap during each pregnancy between 27 and 36 weeks gestation. This vaccine helps prevent pertussis bacteria from infecting the newborn, and may provide protection against pertussis in the baby’s first few months. All family members and caregivers of the infant should be sure to be up-to-date with their pertussis vaccines (DTaP or Tdap, depending on age) before coming into close contact with the infant.

To make an appointment at any of our clinic locations, dial (616) 632-7200. For a schedule of when to get immunizations, go to <http://www.accesskent.com/Health/Immunizations/>.

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KCHD has been in the business of providing health services to Kent County since 1931. The Health Department is home to nearly 260 employees including public health nurses, sanitarians, health educators, technicians, public health administrators, and specialized staff at the Kent County Animal Shelter. The Health Department operates one main clinic and four satellite clinics located in Wyoming, Kentwood, Rockford, and Grand Rapids. To learn more about KCHD services, visit www.accesskent.com/health.