



## **Pertussis**

Whooping cough or Pertussis is NOT a thing of the past. In Stark County in the last year and a half it has been showing its ugly head. In 2009 there were 47 cases. As of mid-September 2010, there are already 45 cases. We think there have been other cases that were not identified, and we expect to hear of more cases continuing into the Fall.

Who gets Pertussis? This could be anyone. Cases last year range from 4 months to 54 years. So far this year, the youngest is 2 months and the oldest is 76 years. There is a mistaken idea that adults don't get Pertussis. They do get it, and often give it to young babies who do not have any immunity.

Pertussis (whooping cough) is a respiratory disease that starts like a mild cold: runny nose, low grade fever, just not feeling good. The cough is not too bad at first, but gets much worse in about a week. The person begins to cough very hard in coughing fits or spasms. Sometimes when a person inhales after such a spasm, there is a peculiar sound—the whoop. The person might cough to the point of passing out or gagging and vomiting. Typically, it is worse at night. Not everyone has all the symptoms especially if they have had the vaccine for Pertussis.

The reason for concern is that there can be serious complications from Pertussis. A baby can become so sick that it might die. Some of the complications for any age person include hernia, pneumonia, broken ribs, or brain damage.

This disease is spread by the bacteria in little droplets of mucus that come out when a person coughs or sneezes, and the next person breathes them in. It is very contagious. The most contagious time is the earliest stage, with the runny nose and slight cough. It is very common for other people in the household to become sick too.

To control the spread of Pertussis, the person who has it must be isolated until they have taken 5 days of an antibiotic that will work on that germ. Isolation is required by Ohio law and means that the person stays home and does not have visitors. To also help control the spread of the disease, doctors recommend that people in the same household or other close contacts should get the antibiotic to prevent their getting sick.

Prevention starts with the vaccines DTaP and Tdap. Five doses of DTaP are required to enter kindergarten. Tdap is required to enter 7<sup>th</sup> grade. Immunity wears off over time, so the booster shot is necessary. The Tdap booster is important for teenagers, people who work in child care or health care. It is especially important for parents of new babies.

For more information about Pertussis please visit:

[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

[www.soundsofpertussis.com](http://www.soundsofpertussis.com)