

Pertussis: “Vaccines Matter”

Pertussis, also known as Whooping Cough is on the rise in northern Illinois particularly in McHenry and Lake Counties. There has been no outbreak in Kendall County as of 12/15/2011 however we have seen a slight up-tic in reported cases.

Vaccines Matter, the Kendall County Health Department advocates the use of DtaP vaccine for infants and preschoolers and TDaP vaccine for adolescents and adults to prevent the outbreak of Pertussis in our schools and in the adult population. Adults are the primary reservoir for Pertussis and it presents with milder symptoms than what is seen in babies and young children. Adults and adolescents may have a mild to moderate cough that may last six to ten weeks, (often called the 100 day cough). Symptoms in the very young are a severe and repeated cough that limits the child’s ability to breathe. The coughing spell may end with a long inspirational wheeze or whooping sound. Babies and young children can become oxygen deprived (hypoxic) and in the most severe cases this can lead to death.

Below is more information on Pertussis taken from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention web site. For additional information visit www.CDC.gov and select the letter “P” for the topics from A to Z list.

Causes

Pertussis, a respiratory illness commonly known as whooping cough, is a very contagious disease caused by a type of bacteria called *Bordetella pertussis*. These bacteria attach to the cilia (tiny, hair-like extensions) that line part of the upper respiratory system. The bacteria release toxins, which damage the cilia and cause inflammation (swelling).

Transmission



Pertussis is a very contagious disease only found in humans and is spread from person to person. People with pertussis usually spread the disease by coughing or sneezing while in close contact with others, who then breathe in the pertussis bacteria. Many infants who get pertussis are infected by older siblings, parents

or caregivers who might not even know they have the disease (Bisgard, 2004 & Wendelboe, 2007). Symptoms of pertussis usually develop within 7 – 10 days after being exposed, but sometimes not for as long as 6 weeks.

Pertussis vaccines are very effective in protecting you from disease but no vaccine is 100% effective. If pertussis is circulating in the community, there is a chance that a fully vaccinated person, of any age, can catch this very contagious disease. If you have been vaccinated, the infection is usually less severe. If you or your child develops a cold that includes a severe cough or a cough that lasts for a long time, it may be pertussis. The best way to know is to contact your doctor.

References

- Bisgard KM, Pascual FB, Ehresmann KR, et al. Infant pertussis: who was the source? *Pediatr Infect Dis J.* 2004;23:985-89.
- Wendelboe AM, Njamkepo E, Bourillon A, et al. Transmission of *Bordetella pertussis* to young infants. *Pediatr Infect Dis J.* 2007;26:293-99.

Vaccines

The best way to prevent pertussis (whooping cough) among infants, children, teens, and adults is to get vaccinated. Also, keep infants and other people at high risk for pertussis complications away from infected people.

In the United States, the recommended pertussis vaccine for infants and children is called DTaP. This is a combination vaccine that protects against three diseases: diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis. For maximum protection against pertussis, children need five DTaP shots. The first three shots are given at 2, 4, and 6 months of age. The fourth shot is given between 15 and 18 months of age, and a fifth shot is given before a child enters school, at 4–6 years of age. Parents can also help protect infants by keeping them away as much as possible from anyone who has cold symptoms or is coughing.

Vaccine protection for pertussis, tetanus and diphtheria fades with time. Before 2005, the only booster available contained protection against tetanus and diphtheria (called Td), and was recommended for teens and adults every 10 years. Today there are boosters for pre-teens, teens and adults that contain protection against tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis (Tdap). Pre-teens going to the doctor for their regular check-up at age 11 or 12 years should get a dose of Tdap. Teens who did not get this vaccine at the 11- or 12-year-old check-up should get vaccinated at their next visit. Adults who did not get Tdap as a pre-teen or teen should get one dose of Tdap. Pregnant women who have not been previously vaccinated with Tdap should get one dose of Tdap preferably during the third trimester or late second trimester (after 20 weeks). Pregnant women not vaccinated during pregnancy should receive one dose of Tdap immediately postpartum before leaving the hospital or birthing center. Adults 65 years and older (grandparents, child care providers, and healthcare providers) who have close contact with infants should get a dose of Tdap. **Getting vaccinated with Tdap – at least two weeks before coming into close contact with an infant – is especially important for families with and caregivers of new infants.**

The easiest thing for adults to do is to get Tdap instead of their next regular tetanus booster—that Td shot that they were supposed to get every 10 years. The dose of Tdap can be given earlier than the 10-year mark, so it is a good idea for adults to talk to a healthcare provider about what is best for their specific situation.

Taken from: www.cdc.gov topics A to Z