

For Immediate Release

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Whooping Cough (Pertussis) Cases in Southwest Nebraska

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) has confirmed four cases of whooping cough (pertussis) in Southwest Nebraska. SWNPHD is working with Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services Epidemiology on monitoring these cases and providing pertussis education in the nine-county health district.

Pertussis is known as “whooping cough” because of the “whooping” sound that is made when gasping for air after a fit of coughing, especially in children. Symptoms will vary by age groups. “We are watching these whooping cough cases very closely. Our concern is that pertussis in its early stages appears to be nothing more than the common cold, it is often not suspected or diagnosed until the more severe symptoms appear,” explained Melissa Propp, RN, SWNPHD Surveillance Nurse.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the best way to prevent whooping cough among infants, children, teens and adults is to get vaccinated. This is a good time to review your shot records and make sure everyone in your family is current on their shots. You can contact SWNPHD or your local healthcare provider to look up shot records in the Nebraska State Immunization Information System.

Challenges with the cough:

- Severe coughs associated with whooping cough can last for weeks or months and are usually sudden and violent.
- Coughs in teenagers and adults may be hard to distinguish from colds or influenza (flu) as the whooping sound may not be present.
- Whooping cough is easy to be under-diagnosed and easily spread to infants and children.
- Infected people are most contagious up to about two weeks after the cough begins.
- Whooping cough is spread through coughing and sneezing in close contact with others who then breathe in the pertussis bacteria.

“Newborns are especially vulnerable to Pertussis, so it is very important for all family members and caregivers to get vaccinated,” explains Propp.

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins and Red Willow counties. For more information call Melissa Propp, RN at 308-345-4223. SWNPHD is located at 404 West 10th Street, McCook – one block north of Arby’s and 501 Broadway, Imperial – entrance on 5th Street. You can also follow SWNPHD on Facebook and Twitter.

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