



THERE ARE NO PERTUSSIS OUTBREAKS IN POLK COUNTY AT THIS TIME

Pertussis Update

Due to a continuing increase in the concern for pertussis in our area, Polk County Public Health would like remind community members about the importance of vaccination and early testing for pertussis. **Any person with a new cough lasting more than a week should be tested, even if you have been vaccinated or have had pertussis before.** Some people can still get pertussis even after receiving the vaccine. In nearly all of these cases the symptoms are much less severe and last for a shorter period of time.

An outbreak is defined as two or more cases from different households clustered in time and space.

Overview

Pertussis is a highly contagious and serious bacterial infection. Pertussis bacteria live in the nose, mouth and throat and are spread by coughing and sneezing. Pertussis often starts with a mild cough and/or cold-like symptoms which develop into a severe cough that can cause gagging and sometimes vomiting. A person with pertussis is most infectious during the first week of these cold-like symptoms and the 2 weeks prior to the onset of a severe cough. Because of this relatively mild, but infectious first week, infected persons can spread pertussis to others and not know it. Symptoms of pertussis begin, on average, 7-10 days after exposure but can take as long as 21 days to show signs of infection. Make sure to report any respiratory illness that occurs within 3 weeks of possible exposure. Treatment for pertussis is most effective toward the beginning of an infection. If you suspect that you or a family member has pertussis, call your healthcare provider. It is very important that you check your child's immunization status. The Polk County Public Health may be able to provide these records for you.

Prevention

Pertussis is especially dangerous to infants and under-immunized children. All infants should have DTaP vaccinations at 2, 4, and 6 months of age with boosters at 12-18 months and again at 4-6 years old. Tdap is a different vaccine and is for use in adolescents and adults. **Because immunity to pertussis decreases over time it is recommended that everyone age 11 and older receive the Tdap vaccine.** Tdap is required for all 7th grade students and highly recommended for new parents, grandparents-to-be and child care providers. Polk County Public Health will be offering both vaccines daily through a walk-in clinic.

At this time Polk County Public Health would like to strongly encourage the following:

- Immunization for all adults and children.
- Early testing for coughs lasting more than a week.
- Cover your cough and wash your hands.

If you have additional questions, please contact Polk County Public Health at 503-623-8175.