

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**Increase in Pertussis cases in Grand Traverse County**

*How to prevent the spread of whooping cough*

The Grand Traverse County Health Department (GTCHD) is seeing a rise in reported cases of Pertussis, also known as whooping cough, in the county. Since late August, the health department has received reports of more than a dozen cases in adults and children, with more being tested weekly. These cases have been found in both vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals. There has also been a rise in reports of whooping cough across the state and country in the past few weeks.

"Pertussis can affect people of all ages, but infants, pregnant people, and those with pre-existing conditions like asthma or other serious lung diseases, obesity, and chronic conditions are at the highest risk for severe disease," said GTCHD Medical Director, Dr. Najibah Rehman. "In 2024, U.S. cases have increased back to pre-pandemic levels and are five times higher than in 2023. We are seeing a similar trend locally."

Pertussis is a highly contagious respiratory illness that spreads easily through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes, releasing droplets containing the bacteria. Initial symptoms may include a low-grade fever, mild cough, and sinus congestion, but can progress to severe coughing fits. After about a week, the infected person may experience violent, dry coughing fits that make it difficult to breathe. If you or your child develop coughing fits, vomiting during or after fits, or if your young child appears blue or stops breathing, it's important to seek medical evaluation for proper treatment. Infected individuals can spread pertussis up to three weeks after the cough begins.

"The best way for people to protect themselves and those around them against pertussis, is to ensure you are up to date on vaccination," said GTCHD Immunization Supervisor Jacalyn Money-Bruno. "It's not only important for infants and children to be current on their pertussis vaccines, but also for everyone in the community to protect those most vulnerable against more serious illness."

**Steps to Prevention:**

1. Stay up to date on Vaccinations:
  - DTaP: Protects children under seven years old from diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis
    - Ages 2, 4, 6, 15-18 months, 4-6 years should receive DTaP
  - Tdap: Protects children seven years and older, adolescents, and adults against tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis
    - Ages 11-12, each pregnancy should receive Tdap, adults should receive Tdap (or Td) every 10 years for life
2. Practice good hygiene by covering your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, washing your hands with warm water and soap often, and staying home when you are sick.

The GTCHD offers both DTaP and Tdap vaccines by appointment. If people have questions or want to schedule an appointment, call 231-995-6131 or talk to your primary care provider.

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