

Since June 10th, 2019, Northeast Tri County Health District (NETCHD) has had 4 confirmed cases of whooping cough (pertussis) reported in Ferry and Stevens counties. Pertussis is a highly contagious infection of the lungs caused by bacteria. Whooping cough can cause hospitalization and even death for young babies. Older kids, teens, and adults often spread the disease to babies. Because of these initial cases and the high likelihood that others have been exposed, this presents a serious public health situation.

Northeast Tri County Health District is coordinating with local medical communities in Keller, Republic and Colville areas. Northeast Tri County Health District's Health Officer, Dr. Artzis, has been intricately involved in cases to verify proper treatment of confirmed cases and identify high risk contacts. When high risk contacts are identified, Dr. Artzis, has worked to ensure proper care including treatment and guidance. Contacts that are not considered high risk are being asked to self-monitor for symptoms for 21 days after exposure. If symptoms do occur, individuals are being asked to isolate and contact healthcare providers for further care. Northeast Tri County Health District will continue to provide support and surveillance of the situation with the goal of preventing illness and death among high risk persons and those who may transmit pertussis to high risk persons. NETCHD will continue to identify and evaluate contacts and recommend appropriate preventive measures, including exclusions, antibiotics, and/or immunization. The goal of the Health District is to provide education to exposed persons about signs and symptoms, as well as facilitate early diagnosis and treatment in order to prevent further spread of the disease. NETCHD also will strive to increase vaccinations in under immunized populations.

Whooping cough spreads very easily by coughing and sneezing. It begins with cold-like symptoms and develops into a bad cough. Coughing spells can be severe, sometimes ending in gagging or vomiting. Some kids also may have a high-pitched "whoop" after they cough, which is how the disease got its common name (although infants may not cough at all, and some teens and adults don't have a "whoop" after they cough).

Vaccination is the best way to protect against whooping cough. The vaccine is DTaP for children younger than 7 years old and Tdap for older children and adults. Pregnant women should get Tdap during the 3rd trimester of every pregnancy to help protect their baby from whooping cough in the first few months of life.

Although vaccines for whooping cough are effective, it is still possible for vaccinated individuals to get whooping cough. Whooping cough vaccine is 80% to 85% effective, but protection declines over time. Check immunization records to verify childhood series were completed and adults have received a dose of Tdap, if not contact your healthcare provider.

Because whooping cough spreads by coughing and sneezing while in close contact with others,

☐ **Stevens County** - 240 E. Dominion, Colville, WA 99114

☐ **Administration Phone:** 509-684-2262, Fax: 509-684-1002

☐ **Community Health Phone:** 509-684-2262, Fax: 509-684-9878

☐ **Environmental Health Phone:** 509-684-2262, Fax: 509-684-8506

☐ **Ferry County** - 147 N. Clark, PO Box 584, Republic, WA 99166

Phone: 509-775-3111, Fax: 509-775-2858

☐ **Pend Oreille County** - 605 Highway 20, Newport, WA 99156

Phone: 509-447-3131, Fax: 509-447-5644

who then breathe in the bacteria. Practicing good hygiene can aid in prevention of the further spread of respiratory illnesses. To practice good hygiene, you should:

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Put your used tissue in the waste basket.
- Cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow, not your hands, if you don't have a tissue.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Use an alcohol-based hand rub if soap and water are not available.

If you or a family member has been exposed to whooping cough and is experiencing symptoms, avoid all public places, avoid contact with pregnant women and infants. Call your healthcare provider **before** going in. Let them know of possible exposure and symptoms you are experiencing. Wear a mask while in the facility. And if you have whooping cough, please stay home and avoid public place until completing 5 days of antibiotics or 21 days from onset of cough.

If you have any questions regarding pertussis or where to you can be seen to be vaccinated, please contact your local healthcare provider or local Northeast Tri County Health District Office:

- Stevens County: (509) 684-2262
- Ferry County: (509) 775-3111
- Pend Oreille County: (509) 447-5644