



MID-MICHIGAN DISTRICT HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Your public health team, connecting with our communities to achieve healthier outcomes

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Pertussis on the rise

Stanton- Pertussis, or whooping cough, was once extremely common, but vaccines developed in the mid-1940s helped drive down the number of cases. But in recent decades, pertussis has been making a comeback.

Michigan has seen an increase in the number of cases of pertussis, including in Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm counties. This has Dr. Robert Graham, Medical Director of the Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD) concerned, especially now that students are returning to school. We all know that illness can spread quickly in the classroom setting, and pertussis is no exception.

Graham would like to remind residents of the importance of being up to date on all vaccinations, including pertussis.

Pertussis is a highly contagious respiratory infection that starts out like a cold, but after seven to ten days leads to a serious and prolonged illness. Severe coughing episodes are often accompanied by vomiting and difficulty breathing. In some cases, a characteristic “whooping” noise is heard as the person tries to catch their breath.

Pertussis is very contagious and most severe for babies. Those with pertussis usually spread the illness by coughing or sneezing while in close contact with others, who then breathe in the bacteria. It can also be spread by sharing drinks or food. Many babies who get pertussis are infected by parents, older siblings, or caregivers who might not even know they are sick.

Babies get their first dose of pertussis vaccine at two months of age, but are not fully protected until completing the series of several more doses over the next year and half. For this reason, MMDHD strongly recommends that adults and adolescents, (especially those who will be around infants) receive the recommended pertussis booster. In addition, pregnant women should get a booster in the third trimester of each pregnancy.

If you're not sure if your children have had all recommended vaccines, speak with their doctor.

The best way to prevent pertussis is through vaccination. Other tips include:

- Wash your hands frequently
- See your family doctor if you have a cold that lasts more than one week
- Stay home from work or school if you have a cough or fever

If your child shows signs of pertussis, do not send them to school or daycare and contact your doctor.

Mid-Michigan District Health Department serves the residents of Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm Counties.

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