HEALTH ADVISORY: Pertussis cases in South Albany

November 7, 2024

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Benton County has been informed that several sport team members who practice at the South Albany Pool have been diagnosed with Pertussis which is also known as whooping cough. No Corvallis Aquatic Team members are known to have Pertussis.

You are being informed because pertussis is very contagious with face-to-face contact and in enclosed spaces, such as indoor pools. Some children and teens miss school or sport events due to pertussis symptoms. A Tdap vaccine is recommended at 11 to 12 years of age, so this age group is often well protected. See section on Prevention below.

Symptoms can appear anywhere from 5-21 days after a person is exposed to infection.
Early symptoms last 1-2 weeks and resemble the common cold, which makes it difficult for medical professionals to diagnose.

- Runny or stuffed-up nose
- Low-grade fever (less than 100.4°F)
- Mild, occasional cough

One to 2 weeks after the first symptoms start, the individual may develop paroxysms, known as coughing fits. These coughing fits usually last 1 to 6 weeks but can last for up to 10 weeks. The cough generally gets worse and becomes more common as the illness continues. Although some people make a high-pitched whoop when they inhale after a coughing fit, it is more common to:

- Vomit during or after coughing fits
- Feel very tired after the fit, but usually seem well in-between fits
- Have difficulty sleeping at night
- Struggle to breathe
- Fracture (break) a rib, mainly in the elderly

Teens and adults can get complications, like pneumonia, from whooping cough, so diagnosis and treatment are important.

Prevention

Pertussis is spread in respiratory droplets that are spread through coughing and sneezing, but also by being close to an infected person who is breathing heavily (think sports teams), talking or singing.

Best steps to protect your family and prevent spread include:

1. **Vaccination.** The pertussis vaccine is recommended for all school age children. A series of 5 vaccines is given before age 7, and an additional booster dose is given starting at about age 11. Additional vaccine boosters are given along with tetanus vaccines, every 10 years, throughout life.

2. **Distancing.** Children and teens with coughing fits are best kept home from school and school activities until they have seen a medical provider and been treated with an antibiotic to kill the bacteria. It is also important to keep them away from **pregnant people, infants, and the elderly** who have more complications from this disease.

3. **Treatment.** Get medical evaluation and treatment early in the infection. Whooping cough is treated with antibiotics which may decrease some symptoms and prevent the cough from getting worse. **Antibiotics work best if given early in the infection**. The antibiotic kills the bacteria so it will not be passed to others.

For Pregnant People and Parents of Infants

Infants less than one year are the most likely to experience severe illness if they develop pertussis. Recommendations to prevent severe whooping cough in infants includes:
- Vaccination of the mother during pregnancy
- Vaccination of infants beginning at 2 months
- Keep infants away from adults and children with coughs.

Speak to your medical provider for more information.

More information on pertussis can be found at the following links:
- [Oregon Health Authority Pertussis/Whooping Cough](#)
- [Oregon Health Authority Pertussis Facts](#)
- [Oregon Health Authority Pertussis FAQ](#)
- [Oregon Health Authority Weekly Communicable Disease Report](#)
- [CDC Whooping Cough (Pertussis)](#)

You may reach Benton County Communicable Disease Program at 541-766-6654 or CDreporting@bentoncountyor.gov

Thank you for supporting the health and safety of our community.

Respectfully,

Carolina Amador, MD, MPH
Public Health Officer

April Holland
Public Health Administrator