



Cowlitz County Health and Human Services

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Increase of Pertussis Cases in Cowlitz County

In the past several weeks, Cowlitz County Health and Human Services (CCHHS) has received reports of Pertussis (also known as whooping cough) for the first time since 2021 and there is evidence of transmission occurring within the county, including within schools.

The CCHHS Communicable Disease team is monitoring the situation and working to contact cases and impacted locations to alert them of potential exposures. **Individuals currently experiencing a prolonged cough or who have been in contact with someone with pertussis and have symptoms should contact their healthcare provider for testing and/or treatment.**

Pertussis is a potentially serious illness, particularly for infants and pregnant women, but can affect anyone at any age. It can lead to serious health problems, particularly in very young children, including apnea (pauses in breathing), pneumonia, syncope (fainting), seizures, and even death.

Early symptoms of whooping cough may include runny nose, sneezing, and cough. After about a week, the cough typically worsens and people often experience coughing fits. Coughing fits can be severe and cause gagging or vomiting as a result.

DTaP or Tdap vaccines protect against whooping cough. Babies and young children are recommended to receive multiple doses of DTaP between ages 2 months and 6 years. Preteens (ages 11-12), or any teen or adult who has not yet been vaccinated, can still receive the Tdap vaccine. Pregnant women should talk to their healthcare provider about how to help protect themselves and their baby. Additionally, regular boosters are recommended in adulthood.

People can check their own or their child's immunization status at <https://myirmobile.com/>, or by contacting their medical provider.

The treatment for pertussis is with antibiotics. Antibiotics are also recommended for people with significant exposures to a person with pertussis including household contacts and high-risk

close contacts. This is to prevent them from getting sick with pertussis. Pertussis can be contagious for several weeks, early treatment with antibiotics can shorten the contagious period.

As kids return to school and respiratory virus season approaches, it's important to keep up with basic illness prevention steps. **Wash your hands thoroughly and often. Try not to share food or drinks and remind children not to share. Cover coughs and sneezes. Stay home and away from others if you have symptoms of illness. If you must leave your home while not feeling well, consider wearing a mask to prevent spreading germs to others.**

More information about pertussis is available [in a recent health alert](#) to Cowlitz County healthcare providers, as well as from the [Washington State Department of Health](#) and the [weekly update on pertussis activity statewide](#).

To contact Health & Human Services, please call 360-414-5599.

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