

News Release

For Immediate Release

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Whooping Cough 101

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) encourages residents to know if they are vaccinated for pertussis, also called whooping cough. Each year about 10,000 cases of pertussis are diagnosed in the US. This is a dramatic reduction from the more than 100,000 cases per year during the early 20th century. The whooping cough vaccine was first licensed in the US in 1914 and became widely used in the 1940's. Since that time, the number of cases and deaths from this disease have gone down significantly.

Challenges with whooping cough:

- Whooping cough is spread through coughing and sneezing in close contact with others who then breathe in the pertussis bacteria.
- Infected people are most contagious about two weeks after the cough begins.
- Severe coughs associated with whooping cough can last for weeks or months and are usually sudden and violent.
- Coughs in teenagers and adults may be hard to distinguish from colds or influenza (flu) as the whooping sound may not be present.
- Whooping cough is often under-diagnosed so it is easily spread to infants and children.

The pertussis vaccine is now part of a combination vaccine that also protects from diphtheria and tetanus. Being up to date on pertussis vaccination is the best way to prevent whooping cough. Children get pertussis vaccine as part of their regular childhood immunizations at 2 months to 15 months and a booster dose prior to going into kindergarten. Preteens get a booster dose at 11 or 12 years, usually right before starting 7th grade.

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) says pregnant women should get the Tdap vaccine during each pregnancy to help protect their newborn until they are able to be vaccinated for pertussis starting at 2 months of age. Children under 3 months old are most at risk for severe disease or death from whooping cough. "The recommended timing for maternal Tdap vaccination is between 27 weeks and 36 weeks of gestation," states the Committee on Obstetric Practice. This Committee Opinion was developed by the [Immunization and Emerging Infections Expert Work Group](#) and the Committee on Obstetric Practice. The full clinical guidance can be read at <https://www.acog.org/clinical/clinical-guidance/committee-opinion/articles/2017/09/update-on-immunization-and-pregnancy-tetanus-diphtheria-and-pertussis-vaccination>.

If you are unsure about whether you or your child are up to date on your pertussis vaccines, talk to your healthcare provider or contact a public health nurse at SWNPHD. You can also look up your shot records in the Nebraska State Immunization Information System (NESIIS) at nesiis-dhhs-prod.ne.gov.

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. You can follow us on Facebook and Instagram or view the website at www.swhealth.ne.gov. Call (308) 345-4223, one number three locations, McCook, Imperial, and Ogallala.

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