



CONTACTS:

Christine Myron, PIO

Central District Health Department
208-327-8639 | cmyron@cdhd.idaho.gov

Katrina Williams, Media Contact

Southwest District Health
208-455-5317 | Katrina.williams@phd3.idaho.gov

Press Release

DATE: March 1, 2018

Whooping Cough Cases High Throughout Treasure Valley; Public Health Urges Awareness

Reports of pertussis (whooping cough) are on the rise in Ada and Canyon counties. Over the past four months, 89 cases have been reported—70 of those cases include Ada County residents, while 19 are Canyon County residents.

Whooping cough is a very contagious respiratory disease that can be life-threatening for infants and small children. About half of babies younger than one year old who get whooping cough end up in the hospital. People with whooping cough usually spread the disease by coughing or sneezing while in close contact with others. Parents, older siblings, or other caregivers can give whooping cough to babies without even knowing they have the disease.

Treasure Valley Numbers

Whooping cough cases tend to peak every three to five years. The last peak was in 2014-2015, when nearly 300 cases of whooping cough were reported in Ada and Canyon counties. The latest cycle of whooping cough began hitting Ada County back in October 2017, while Canyon County cases began increasing in January 2018. Whooping cough can affect people of all ages but in both counties, 13 to 18-year olds have been hit the hardest so far. A number of cases have also been reported among 10-12 year olds, and adults between 19 and 39 years old. Cases are expected to rise in the Treasure Valley, since there is often a lag time between when people become sick and see their health care provider for testing and care.

Vaccine is the Best Defense

The best way to protect yourself and those around you is to get vaccinated against whooping cough. Vaccination helps protect you and reduces the risk of passing it on to vulnerable children and infants who are too young to get the first dose of vaccine. Whooping cough vaccines (DTaP for infants/children and Tdap for adolescents/adults) are available in many physicians' offices, local public health district offices, and pharmacies.

While the vaccine is your best defense, unfortunately, it is not perfect. About half of the recent whooping cough cases in Ada County were in people up-to-date on their whooping cough vaccines. If you are vaccinated, but have a persistent cough, whooping cough is still a possibility.

Pregnant women should talk to their doctors about receiving a Tdap vaccination during pregnancy because the mother can pass some protection against whooping cough along to the baby until he's 2 months old and able to be vaccinated.

More About Whooping Cough

Symptoms of whooping cough include a cough that is persistent, comes in "fits," is so forceful it causes vomiting, or it may cause a noise as the person breathes in. Those with symptoms should remain home until they have seen their health care provider or are not contagious.

Babies are at an increased risk of hospitalization and serious complications, including pneumonia, convulsions, and apnea (slowed or stopped breathing). While teens and adults can also have complications from whooping cough, they are usually less serious, especially in those who have received a pertussis vaccine.

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