FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

When: Wednesday, September 22, 2004
Who: The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

Contact/Phone:	**Coldwater**	**517-279-9561 x 132**	**Hillsdale**	**517-437-7395 x110**
	Sturgis	**269-659-4013 x 108**	**Three Rivers**	**269-273-2161 x 207**

Increased cases of Pertussis in the Branch, Hillsdale and St. Joseph Counties – in both children and adults.

What: The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency has seen an unusual rise in the number of reported cases of pertussis in Branch, Hillsdale and St. Joseph counties. Pertussis, more commonly called Whooping Cough, is a highly contagious disease marked by severe coughing. The disease gets its name from the "whoop" sound many people make when they try to breathe during a severe coughing spell.

Commonly thought of as a childhood disease, pertussis more often effects older children and adults who are often not diagnosed. Older children and adults who contract the disease often don't realize that they have it. Older kids and adults get it as the immunity from their childhood shots loses "wears off". If you have noticed the following symptoms (mild or severe) over the past few days and weeks, please make an appointment to see your health care provider.

* Coughs usually produce thick mucus
* Lips and nails turn blue due to lack of oxygen
* Coughing can last 1-2 months
* Vomiting may occur during coughing
* Patient is exhausted after coughing spell
* Coughing occurs more often at night
* "Whoop" sound is heard as person tries to breathe during the spell

Who: It is most easily **recognized** in children. It is spread by coughing or sneezing or touching or sharing utensils of infected persons. Also, people who "catch" pertussis often pass it on to infants and toddlers at home who are not yet fully vaccinated. **For teens and adults**, if you work or are in a crowded setting (School, hospital, large factory, prison), you are more likely to get and spread diseases like pertussis.

Diagnosing: Make an appointment with your health provider if you have many of the symptoms listed above. The symptoms may be mild or severe so don't be fooled.

Treatment: Pertussis is treatable with antibiotics. Infected persons should avoid contact with **anyone**, especially small children and infants who may not be fully immunized. Older children and adults should not go to school or work until treated with antibiotics.

How long will I have it? : Symptoms appear between 6 to 21 days after exposure to the disease. The coughing spasms can last from a few weeks to a few months. You can be contagious for a month or longer.

Who do I call? Call your health care provider or your local Health Department office (numbers listed at top of page). Also, you can read more about pertussis on our web page at: www.bhsj.org