

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

Media Contact: John Robertson, Director of Health Promotion & Education

Phone: 517-279-9561 x144 or robertsonj@bhsj.org

Pertussis Cases in Sturgis and Three Rivers

It's winter in Michigan, strap in for a bumpy ride. Pertussis, or whooping cough for us baby boomers and older, has seen a revival in Michigan during the past year with cases increasing 76% from 2005 to 2006 (*MMWR 11/10/06*). There has been one confirmed case of a teenager in Sturgis and a young child in Three Rivers. Several probable cases are being investigated. In Kalamazoo County over 100 cases were reported recently. The Community Health Agency is recommending testing and treatment of contacts with symptoms and treatment of close contacts without symptoms.

Pertussis occurs more commonly at certain times of the year and we are in the midst of a peak in the disease at this time. Most serious illness and death occur in children less than 1 year of age who are not fully immunized. The primary symptom is a non-stop cough, often severe at night and sometimes followed by throwing up. A person will often end the series of coughs by breathing in desperately and creating a characteristic whooping sound. Infants (who get the cough, but usually no "whoop") are often exposed by older children or adults who have the disease. Protection from being vaccinated as small children begins to fade at about age 12 to 13 years and as a result, outbreaks in middle schools are common.

What to do? A new vaccine "Tdap" is safe for use in adolescents and adults, up to age 65. The CDC recommends Tdap to be given routinely as a booster to school children entering middle school. It also should be given to family members that live with an infant < 1 year of age. A pregnant woman and her husband should receive the vaccine before birth of their baby. All health care workers should be vaccinated. Doctors are encouraged to be alert for possible cases. Ill persons should be excluded from school or work until they have received 5 days of antibiotic. Close contacts unable to take or refuse treatment should be excluded from school until 21 days have expired from the last contact with the pertussis case.

As with any cough illness, proper hand washing and covering the cough with a handkerchief or the elbow is effective in limiting the spread of disease. Be aware, a person may be contagious 7 days before coughing begins and are most contagious during the first 2 weeks of coughing. The incubation period ranges from 4-21 days. Early treatment of symptomatic and pre-symptomatic contacts is most beneficial in preventing the spread of this disease.

More information can be found on the Community Health Agency Website

www.bhsj.org/OtherPubs/Pertussisinfo2003.pdf

or the CDC website

www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/pertussis_t.htm