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--News Release--



Buchanan County Experiencing Whooping Cough Outbreak

Buchanan County is experiencing an outbreak of whooping cough, otherwise known as pertussis. Five confirmed cases have been diagnosed. Whooping cough is most dangerous to infants and the elderly. Residents of the area should be aware of symptoms of whooping cough and not take them lightly. Persons who feel they or a family member may have the disease should contact their doctor. Individuals who feel they may have been in contact with someone with whooping cough can contact the Buchanan County Health Center Public Health Department to talk through their situation.

Whooping cough symptoms include:

- Cold like symptoms of runny nose and irritating cough initially
- Within 1 – 2 weeks, individuals may have coughing spells that can not be controlled
- Some may have trouble getting their breath after coughing
- The gasping for air may produce a high-pitched whooping cough
- Coughing fits are most common at night, and can be followed by vomiting
- Between coughing spells, the individual appears well
- Whooping cough in teens and adults may have mild symptoms

“Whooping cough can be very serious for infants who may lose their breath completely and are at highest risk for death from this disease. The elderly are an easy target for the disease also, with the fear that they will develop pneumonia”, explained Amy Marlow, Buchanan County Health Center Public Health Department Director. “This is why it is important to stop the spread of this disease and for infants, teens, and adults to be vaccinated on schedule. Not only are we protecting ourselves when we receive immunizations, but those around us also. The vaccine Tdap now contains whooping cough protection for adolescents and adults, so if you have updated your tetanus shot since 2005, you may be better protected from this disease. If you are in close contact with someone with the whooping cough, it is still recommended for you to take antibiotics to prevent the disease no matter your immunization status.”

A public health investigation occurs once a disease such as whooping cough is diagnosed. The Public Health Department at the Buchanan County Health Center contacts those individuals who have been around the ill person/s. Antibiotics are given to appropriate contacts to prevent further illness and stop the spread of disease. Watching for the disease in the area continues for a period of time. The Department would like to thank the health care providers and those involved in this outbreak for their cooperation and assistance.

If you have questions regarding whooping cough or want to learn more, information is available on the Iowa Department of Public Health or Centers for Disease Control website, or by calling the Public Health Department at 319-332-0860. As always, the easiest way to stop the spread of disease is by staying at home when you are ill, staying away from large groups of people when ill, coughing into your elbow, washing your hands with soap and warm water, not sharing drinking or eating utensils, and taking antibiotics until they are gone.

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