



**COLUMBUS PUBLIC HEALTH AND
FRANKLIN COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH– PRESS RELEASE
FOR TUESDAY, JULY 13**

**HEALTH OFFICIALS ISSUE PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT AS PERTUSSIS CASES
SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASE**

Columbus Public Health and Franklin County Board of Health officials have issued a Public Health Alert to area physicians to actively monitor potential cases of pertussis (whooping cough) and to strongly encourage parents and loved ones to get vaccinated with a booster to regain immunity against the disease. Due to a significant increase of cases in our region, Public Health is investigating and collaborating with area providers to assure the health and safety of our residents.

"Over the last several months, whooping cough has been on the rise," says Columbus Public Health Commissioner Dr. Teresa C. Long. "We do a terrific job at making sure young children get the pertussis vaccines they need to be protected, but parents must know the immunity may weaken by adolescence, putting adults and teenagers at risk for the disease, or even infecting their newborns. To assure protection, they should be vaccinated with a booster."

Pertussis is a bacterial respiratory disease that spreads easily and often begins with cold-like symptoms. The disease often proceeds to a severe, constant cough that ends with a "whoop", primarily in younger children. Older children, teens and adults may not have the "whoop". The cough is sometimes followed by vomiting. Usually there is little or no fever. The disease is spread by close contact with respiratory secretions. Young infants may require hospitalization.

As of July 12, 224 suspected cases have been reported in Franklin County (including Columbus), of which 135 have been lab confirmed. In 2009, Franklin County (including Columbus) reported 350, with 198 confirmed.

Health officials recommend anyone with a cough lasting longer than two weeks consult with their health care providers. Patients who are diagnosed with Pertussis and those persons who are identified as close contacts of cases should be given an antibiotic to decrease the transmission of the disease. Long says children can be protected from getting whooping cough with the common childhood vaccine Diphtheria, Tetanus and Pertussis (DtaP).

Starting for the upcoming 2010-2011 school-year, Ohio law for immunizations needed to enter school now includes a booster dose of the Tdap vaccine for all students entering the 7th grade. The Ohio Department of Health recently revised immunization requirements for school attendance. “This vaccine helps protect seventh graders from tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis (whooping cough.) To help with the new vaccination requirement, we strongly urge parents to plan ahead, and get the requirement met as soon as possible,” says Franklin County Board of Health Commissioner Susan Tilgner. “Take this opportunity to also have any member of your family 11 years of age and older get the booster shot too,” Tilgner added.

Both health departments offer immunization clinics throughout the summer and all year long to assure cost-effective and convenient vaccinations are available. For more information on clinics and pertussis, visit both www.publichealth.columbus.gov and www.franklincountyohio.gov/health.

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