

Dear Parent or Guardian:

There have been several confirmed cases of **Pertussis** illness, commonly known as “**Whooping Cough**” in Grant County. Sadly, one infant has died as a result of this infection. The illness is most severe in children under one year of age.

What it is

Pertussis is very easily spread from person to person through coughing, sneezing or contact with mucus from the nose and throat. Once infected and if not treated, a person with Pertussis can pass the infection to others for 3-4 weeks.

Symptoms or signs of Pertussis include:

- Cough, runny nose, sneezing, mild fever (Cold-like symptoms) followed by a persistent cough. The persistent cough occurs in explosive bursts.
- In adolescents and adults, pertussis may cause only mild cold-like symptoms or it may appear as repeated “hard” or violent coughs. In some adolescents and adults, the only symptom may be a persistent cough, often worse at night.
- The “fits” of cough can be hard enough to cause sweating, exhaustion, bulging eyes, breathing difficulties, vomiting or gagging.
- The Pertussis cough may be followed by a high pitched “whoop” when breathing in. Hence, the “whooping cough” name.
- Between bursts of coughing, people with pertussis may appear well.

What to do

Anyone with a cough lasting longer than 7 days and any of the signs listed above should check with a personal health care provider, health clinic or Grant County Health District. Everyone should practice good illness prevention like frequent hand-washing, covering a cough and/or sneeze with one’s arm and staying at home if ill.

The most effective way to prevent pertussis is by immunization with vaccines called **DTaP for children or Tdap for adolescents (11 years and older) and adults**. The vaccine is available at Grant County Health District and local personal healthcare providers or clinics.

For students in public schools, Washington State requires evidence of Pertussis (DTaP) vaccine for entering kindergarten and Pre-School and (Tdap) vaccine for students in 6th grade through 8th grades. The tetanus booster without pertussis will not protect students and does not meet state requirements. Parents/guardians must sign a form at school if they choose to exempt their student from vaccinations for medical or religious reasons. Call the school (345-2541) with questions.

Information about Pertussis is available from your healthcare provider, Grant County Health District (509-754-6060 or 509-766-7960 or www.granthealth.org) and Washington Department of Health website, <http://www.doh.wa.gov/EHSPHL/factsheet/pertussis.htm>.

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