

**Grant County Health District – Always Working for a Healthier and Safer Grant County**



Ephrata Office County Courthouse  
PO Box 37, Ephrata, WA 98823  
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1038 West Ivy Suite 100, Moses Lake WA 98837  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**FOR INFORMATION CONTACT:**  
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**- GRANT COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT -**

**GRANT COUNTY, WA** – Public Health staff at the Grant County Health District are responding to reports of 2 confirmed cases of pertussis, or whooping cough. Both cases are students at Columbia Ridge Elementary School in Ephrata.

Whooping cough is a respiratory disease caused by bacteria *Bordetella pertussis*. It is highly contagious and can occur at any age. Severe disease is more common in young children without whooping cough vaccine. Whooping cough can be very serious or even deadly for infants. It is spread when an infected person coughs or sneeze the bacteria.

Whooping cough begins as a mild upper respiratory infection and with symptoms similar to a common cold, including sneezing, runny nose, low-grade fever and a mild cough. Within two weeks, the cough becomes more severe and often causes episodes of rapid coughs (coughing fits) followed by a crowing or high pitched whoop and thick clear mucus; vomiting may also occur. These coughing fits are more frequent at night and may recur for one to two months.

People exposed to whooping cough need antibiotics to stop the disease. As a precaution antibiotics are given to close contacts of the pertussis cases to prevent further cases. Even those exposed who are up to date on pertussis vaccine need to be treated. Those contacts who are not fully vaccinated and who do not get treated will not be able to return to child care, school or other group activities for a time period of up to three weeks after they were exposed.

Ephrata School District and the Health District staff are notifying people who will need treatment. Those exposed will get their medicine through their medical provider or through a special Health District clinic held on Friday, February 22, 2008 at Columbia Ridge Elementary School. "School officials are to be commended for their cooperative and proactive approach to the situation," said Peggy Grigg, Health District Administrator.

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“Vaccination for whooping cough can greatly reduce the chances of severe illness, especially for infants and young children.”

In addition to taking the recommended pills, close contacts without whooping cough vaccination should be vaccinated now. Others should also seek the pertussis shot, to provide protection now or in the future. Any person with a cough that lasts more than a week without improvement should see a medical provider to ensure the cough is not pertussis. Until recent years, vaccines protecting against pertussis were only used in children under the age of 7 (TDaP). Immunity from the vaccine often does not last the whole life, but only about 5 to 10 years. Now there is a vaccine for adolescents and adults that can prevent pertussis. It is available as a tetanus "booster" shot, called Tdap.

For questions about pertussis or whooping cough contact your healthcare provider or the Grant County Health District at 509-766-7960, or see a fact sheet at [www.doh.wa.gov/EHSPHL/factsheet/pertussis.htm](http://www.doh.wa.gov/EHSPHL/factsheet/pertussis.htm).

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