



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

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FOR INFORMATION CONTACT

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- GRANT COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH UPDATE -

PERTUSSIS

A pertussis, or whooping cough, outbreak has been identified in conjunction with the State High School Wrestling tournament held in Tacoma February 20-21, 2009. As of March 13, 2009 there have been 29 laboratory confirmed cases of whooping cough (pertussis) in Kittitas County; 21 of these cases have been Kittitas Secondary School students and staff. 4 Snohomish athletes and 1 from Pierce County have recently been identified as being infected. Grant County has had no cases.

Pertussis (<http://www.doh.wa.gov/EHSPHL/factsheet/pertussis.htm>) is highly contagious and spreads easily through coughing and sneezing. Initial symptoms are similar to the common cold — sneezing, runny nose, low-grade fever, and a mild cough. Within two weeks, the cough may become severe and can develop into coughing spells followed by a high-pitched whoop. An infected person can spread the disease from the beginning of the cold-like symptoms to three weeks after the coughing episodes start. Antibiotics can reduce the contagious period. Pertussis can be very serious and even fatal, especially in infants.

Children should get five vaccinations between 2 months of age and when they start school. A whooping cough booster shot called Tdap is now available and recommended for people 11-64. **GETTING THE TDAP VACCINE AS AN ADOLESCENT OR ADULT CAN PREVENT PERTUSSIS.** This is a one-time vaccine that can be given as a tetanus booster. Tdap vaccine has recently become required for 6th grade entry. Many adults and adolescents, such as high school students may not yet have had a Tdap booster yet. Talk to your doctor right away, or contact the Health District at 509-766-7960 about a Tdap booster, which can be given right away if none has been received before.

ALL INDIVIDUALS WHO ATTENDED THE WRESTLING TOURNAMENT AT THE TACOMA DOME AND HAVE SYMPTOMS OF PERTUSSIS, INCLUDING COUGH, SHOULD SEE THEIR DOCTOR IMMEDIATELY AND CONTACT THE HEALTH DISTRICT AT 509-766-7960.

CHICKENPOX

9 cases of varicella, or chickenpox, have been identified in the Moses Lake School District. Immunity can only be fully verified by 2 doses of vaccine, a doctor's note or a lab test verifying immunity to chickenpox. If more cases are identified, students who are not able to fully verify their immunity could be excluded. Please check your children's immunization records to verify that they have had 2 doses of varicella vaccine. Two doses of varicella vaccine are only

required in kindergarten for the current school year; one dose is required for sixth grade. This statewide requirement will be phased in overtime to all grades.

INFLUENZA

Grant County Health District has been working closely with area healthcare facilities in voluntarily reporting positive influenza test results. As of March 12, 2009 Grant County has had 204 confirmed cases over 93% of these cases did not receive a flu vaccine this year.

The CDC now advises all children from six months through 18 years of age be vaccinated against the flu. Vaccination is also recommended for any adults who want to protect themselves from the flu. Adults 50 and older, people with certain chronic medical conditions like asthma, household contacts of people with chronic illnesses, pregnant women, healthcare workers and childcare providers are especially encouraged to get vaccinated.

Besides getting your flu vaccine, you can take the following actions to stop the spread of the flu and other illnesses:

- Cover your coughs and sneezes.
- Use tissues and throw them away after each use.
- Wash your hands often.
- Stay home if you are ill. Don't go to work.
- Children should not attend child care or school if they are ill.

Remember last year's vaccination won't protect you this year.

IF YOU VISIT A HEALTH CARE PROVIDER OR FACILITY FOR SYMPTOMS OF PERTUSSIS, VARICELLA, OR INFLUENZA, PLEASE ADVISE THEM AHEAD OF TIME AND REQUEST A MASK SO YOU DON'T SPREAD DISEASE TO OTHERS.

If you have any further questions, please contact us at the numbers listed above. We thank you in advance for your cooperation.

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