



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

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TO: Grant County Media

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**Grant County Health Officer Downgrades
Whooping Cough (Pertussis) Outbreak: County Continues to
Experience Increased Number of Cases**
Residents and Healthcare Providers Cautioned to Watch for Signs of Whooping Cough

Grant County, WA – The Grant County Health Officer is downgrading the Whooping Cough Outbreak of 2010-2011. Since October the number of whooping cough cases reported to the Grant County Health District has declined. However, Grant County continues to experience a greater number of whooping cough cases than neighboring counties and continues to have occasional cases of whooping cough.

During 2011, 29 whooping cough cases were reported. In the course of the 16 month outbreak there were 57 cases, including one infant death was investigated by the Health District. In the five years previous to 2010, Grant County experienced 1-4 cases per year.

Whooping cough is a threat in Washington State as the number of cases has increased by over 40% between 2010 and 2011. This year, two infants died due to whooping cough, (Yakima and Snohomish counties). Fortunately, whooping cough cases in counties surrounding Grant continue to be low, at 2-5 cases.

The work of preventing whooping cough is not over. The Grant County Health District has a 5-year plan to control the disease. The goal of the plan is to reduce the number of cases or at least keep from increasing. In order to return to the lower pre-outbreak number of cases (1-4 cases per year), the following steps are recommended.

- **All Grant County residents should make sure that their Pertussis vaccine is up-to-date.** Check with your healthcare provider or the Health District.
- **Most importantly, school aged children, pregnant women and adults who care for babies and children need to update their Pertussis vaccination.** Remember, young babies can't get their first vaccine until they're 2 months old and are not considered reasonably protected until they get FOUR shots by the age of 15-18 months old. **Most infants get whooping cough from family members.**
- **Healthcare providers should always consider testing for Pertussis when a patient is seen for an unexplained cough,** especially if the cough has been present for at least 14 days.
- **As cases are reported to the Grant County Health District, our public health nurses will work with the healthcare providers and families to identify all those who may have been exposed.** During the

recent outbreak, Grant County Health District identified over 580 people who were exposed to Pertussis and made referrals for Pertussis testing and/or medications when appropriate.

“It takes every person to care about preventing Pertussis, meaning that each capable individual to purposely get vaccinated, cover their mouths when they cough, seek medical care when they have persistent cough, and to do the same for the children they care for,” says Shawta Sackett RN, MPH Community Public Health Manager and Epidemiologist.

Grant County Health Officer reminds residents:

- Pertussis is a vaccine preventable illness. Children should get 5 DTaP vaccinations between 2 months old and when they start school.
- Because immunity from the Pertussis vaccine or disease wears off, child care providers, family members and caregivers of babies should make sure they are up-to-date with their Pertussis vaccinations. This includes formal child care settings, preschools, church nurseries and friends and family members babysitting.
- To protect their babies, mothers and fathers should get the Tdap booster before, during or immediately after delivery.
- All health care workers, school staff, and child care providers should be fully immunized for Pertussis.
- The Tdap booster shot is available and recommended for people 11 years and older, but should be given to those as young as 7 years old who have not been properly vaccinated in the past.
- Tdap vaccine is required for 6th grade school entry.

For more information please visit www.granthealth.org/pertussis.html.

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