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Update on Pertussis Outbreak

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The Grand Traverse County Health Department continues to respond cases of Pertussis affiliated with Grand Traverse Academy. The number of cases associated with this outbreak as of **November 14th**, there are **#10 confirmed cases and 167 probable cases linked to this school outbreak**. This outbreak appears to be slowing at the Academy.

In addition, the Health Department is reporting **5 additional confirmed cases in the community (with no link identified to GTA)**. The age range for the 15 total confirmed cases is 4 months to 44 years of age. 10 of the 15 cases were not vaccinated or not up-to-date on their Pertussis vaccine. It is important that both children and adults are up-to-date on their immunizations. Booster shots for pertussis are critical because, unlike some other vaccine-preventable diseases, neither the pertussis disease nor vaccine confers lifelong immunity.

As additional cases are identified in the community, the Grand Traverse County Health Department is conducting full case investigations and making specific recommendations for evaluation and preventative prophylaxis for close contacts. The Health Department continues to receive calls on their Pertussis hotline for prophylaxis. The hotline has been staffed daily for the past week, including Saturday, Sunday and Veteran's day, and staff have responded to over 900 phone calls so far and administered over 60 Pertussis vaccines.

The Health Department is urging the families with kids who are ill or who are considered close contacts to:

- **COMPLETE THE FULL COURSE OF ANTIBIOTICS PROPHYLACTICS and TREATMENT.**
- **STAY HOME AND NOT CONGREGATE IN PUBLIC PLACES** if you are sick (church, mall, movie theatre, sporting events etc).
- **GET CURRENT ON PERTUSSIS VACCINATIONS**- there are 400+ doses of pertussis vaccine available in the community through the Health Department, local pharmacies and physician offices.

****Members of the community can also help protect themselves and prevent the spread of whooping cough (and other illnesses) by taking the following precautions:**

- Washing hands frequently and thoroughly
- Covering nose/mouth when coughing
- Staying home from work and school when sick, even if just a cough
- Contacting their health care provider if they have a prolonged or severe cough
- Getting up-to-date on their whooping cough vaccination

Children should receive vaccinations (DTaP Vaccine) against pertussis at 2, 4, 6 and 15 months and again between the ages of 4 and 6 years of age. Starting at age 11 all children should receive a single dose of the Tdap vaccine that provides additional protection against pertussis. Any adolescent as well as any adult who has not received a Tdap in the past should also get a single dose to reduce their risk of contracting or spreading the disease to others.

Can children get Pertussis that have been immunized? Whooping cough vaccines are effective, but do not last as long as we would like. Getting whooping cough or a whooping cough vaccine (as a child or an adult) does not protect you for a lifetime. CDC's current estimate is that Tdap vaccination protects against whooping cough in about 7 out of 10 people who receive it and the other 3 are protected against serious disease. Whooping cough vaccination protects against severe illness- If you get the vaccine and still get whooping cough, you will have fewer coughing fits, shorter illness, and be less likely to suffer from disease complications.

Pertussis is contagious when someone is symptomatic. If someone is around someone who is actively coughing with pertussis, and is not vaccinated, they are very likely to get it. The vaccine is available at the GTCHD and many area physician offices and pharmacies. It is strongly encouraged. The GTCHD is not in a position to do mass clinics currently, while the focus is on the treatment of over 1200 students and staff of Grand Traverse Academy. Early symptoms can last for 1 to 2 weeks and usually include: Runny nose, Low-grade fever (generally minimal throughout the course of the disease) and Mild, occasional cough Apnea – a pause in breathing (in infants)

Great care needs to be taken not to spread their illness. The concern is the spread to the most vulnerable people in our community, infants, pregnant women, and those with suppressed immune systems, some of whom cannot be vaccinated. Whooping cough is a very serious illness, which is preventable by vaccine. Babies cannot receive their first dose until they are two months old. They are the most vulnerable and at high risk of death if they get pertussis. If you are or have a vulnerable member of the community in your household, be aware that there are multiple cases of pertussis in our community and be mindful of where you go, who you are around, or allow to be around you or your newborn baby, particularly if they are unvaccinated or are ill.

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