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NEVADA STATE HEALTH DIVISION

NEWS RELEASE

The Nevada State Health Division is Urging People to Practice Prevention Measures to Prevent Pertussis (Whooping Cough)

Carson City – The Nevada State Health Division is currently investigating four confirmed cases of pertussis (whooping cough) in Churchill County, Nevada and is urging people to practice prevention measures to help prevent this disease from spreading. Cases are occurring in adults and children.

“Pertussis is a vaccine preventable disease. It is critical that children old enough to receive the vaccine get vaccinated. Physicians are strongly encouraged to administer the tetanus, diphtheria, and acellular pertussis (Tdap) vaccine instead of the tetanus and diphtheria (Td) vaccine to adolescents, adults, and health care workers whenever a tetanus vaccine is indicated,” said Tracey D. Green, M.D., Nevada State Health Officer.

Nationally, pertussis outbreaks are on the rise and many states other than California are experiencing outbreaks. This includes Washington, Arizona, Oregon, Illinois, North Carolina, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Maine, Vermont, New Jersey, Wisconsin, Montana, Florida and several others.

In adolescents and adults, pertussis can cause severe coughing spells which can lead to difficulty breathing, vomiting, and disturbed sleep. It can also cause incontinence, rib fractures, and passing out from violent coughing. It is sometimes called the 100 day cough. Up to 2 in 100 adolescents and 5 in 100 adults with pertussis are hospitalized or have complications, including pneumonia and death. The consequences for infants can be even worse. Pertussis in infants can cause coughing spells so bad that it is hard for infants to eat, drink, or breathe. These spells can last for weeks. More than half of infants less than 1 year of age who get pertussis must be hospitalized. Pertussis can also cause pneumonia, seizures, brain damage, and death.

Avoiding contact with sick individuals can prevent illness. Additionally, frequent hand-washing and covering your mouth and nose when you sneeze and/or cough is strongly recommended. Antibiotics may be used for asymptomatic household contacts of an infected person to prevent disease. DTaP, the childhood vaccine to prevent pertussis, is given at ages 2, 4, 6 and 12 months of age. A booster of DTaP is then administered at age 4 – 6 years. For adolescents and adults, a Tdap booster is needed to increase immunity against pertussis. All children in Nevada entering the 7th grade are required by law to have a Tdap. All adults, especially those that are in contact with a newborn, are encouraged to get their Tdap vaccine. Vaccinating those around a newborn will help protect that newborn since they are not old enough yet to start their immunizations.



A handwritten signature of Richard Whitley.

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