

06/14/2010

### Pertussis in Thurston County

In the past week we have had two suspect cases of pertussis reported in a 1<sup>st</sup> and a 5<sup>th</sup> grader. Both of the children were treated with antibiotics but they were not tested so we won't know for sure if that is what they had. Testing patients prior to treating makes it easier for us to make decisions about excluding non immune or partially immune students from school and others from sensitive occupations. Information on diagnosis, treatment and management of pertussis is attached. Please share this information with all clinical staff in your practice setting. We ask that you have a heightened awareness for pertussis, and take the following steps to minimize pertussis transmission in the community.

- **Consider pertussis in patients of all ages with cough illness of >2 weeks duration and in patients with respiratory illness of any duration who have been in contact with persons with a prolonged cough illness.** Some adolescents and adults may have less severe disease, but can still transmit the infection.
- **Consider pertussis in infants <6 months of age** with respiratory tract symptoms. Note that young infants may present with "atypical" symptoms including apnea and that fever is absent or low grade.
- **Obtain diagnostic testing** (PCR and/or DFA testing plus culture) of persons with suspected pertussis to confirm the diagnosis and guide appropriate preventive treatment of family members and other contacts exposed to pertussis cases at the workplace, school, and health care facilities.
- **Take a thorough patient history to determine if there are close contacts of the patient requiring preventive treatment or clinical evaluation and testing for pertussis.** Persons in contact with pertussis cases should be monitored for development of respiratory tract symptoms for 21 days after last contact with the infected person.
- **Provide preventive therapy for close contacts (droplet close) of pertussis cases.**
- **Exclude persons with cough illness from close contact with infants and expectant mothers**, including on labor and delivery suites, and in the household and community.
- **Use droplet precautions** (surgical mask) when within 3 feet of persons with suspected pertussis during patient encounters, especially during examination and testing. Standard precautions for contact with pertussis patients include the use of gowns and gloves.
- **Provide adequate and understandable instruction in disease control measures** to each patient who has been diagnosed with pertussis and to contacts who have been exposed, including that **persons treated for pertussis should remain at home and avoid contact with others until 5 days after initiation of appropriate therapy.**
- **Patients with undiagnosed cough illnesses should be identified promptly upon initial presentation to the health care facility**, separated from other patients if possible, and given a surgical mask to wear if the patient can tolerate it.
- **Never miss an opportunity to update your patient's immunizations. Tdap is recommended for individuals 11 years of age and older.**

**Report Cases to the Confidential Notifiable Condition Reporting Line** (24 hour recorded reporting line) 360-786-5470 or Nurses line (during business hours) at 867-2672.