

NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

Contact: Melissa Propp, RN at 308-345-4223 or email: nurse@swhealth.ne.gov

Whooping Cough in Southwest Nebraska

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) has been contacted that a diagnosis of pertussis is in our health district. Pertussis is known as “whooping cough” because of the “whooping” sound that is made when gasping for air after a fit of coughing.

“Pertussis in its early stages appears to be nothing more than the common cold, it is often not suspected or diagnosed until the more severe symptoms appear,” shares Melissa Propp, SWNPHD Surveillance Nurse. “Infected people are most contagious up to about two weeks after the cough begins. Antibiotics may shorten the amount of time someone is contagious.”

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the best way to prevent pertussis among infants, children, teens and adults is to get vaccinated. Parents should be sure their infants and young children are vaccinated on schedule using the shortest recommended interval. It is very important that adults, especially parents, caregivers and grandparents, receive vaccination with the pertussis-containing vaccine (Tdap).

Severe coughs associated with pertussis can last for weeks or months and are usually sudden, and violent. Coughs from pertussis in teenagers and adults may be hard to distinguish from colds or influenza. Since pertussis symptoms in teens and adults can be less severe, it is easy to be under-diagnosed in these populations and easily spread to infants and children.

Pertussis is spread through coughing and sneezing in close contact with others who then breathe in the pertussis bacteria. Practicing good hygiene is always recommended to prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses:

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze
- Put your used tissue in the waste basket
- If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow, not your hands
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub

“Being up-to-date with pertussis vaccines is especially important for families with and caregivers of new infants,” explains Propp. “For more information on signs and symptoms of whooping cough contact SWNPHD by calling 308-345-4223 or email: nurse@swhealth.ne.gov.”

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Perkins and Red Willow counties. SWNPHD is located at 404 West 10th Street, McCook – one block north of Arby's. You can also follow us on [Facebook.com/swnphd](https://www.facebook.com/swnphd) and [Twitter@swpublichealth](https://twitter.com/swpublichealth).

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