



DEC. 10, 2008

HEALTH ADVISORY

Pertussis Cases Reported in North Dakota

Since November 25th, 11 new cases of pertussis have been reported to the North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH). Of these, four are laboratory confirmed; four are epidemiologically linked to confirmed cases and three are probable. Ten of the 11 cases have had possible links to outbreaks in Minnesota. All of the cases reported are from the eastern part of North Dakota.

The number of pertussis cases usually peaks every three to five years. The most recent peak in North Dakota was in 2004, when 757 cases were reported. North Dakota saw 168 cases in 2005, 43 cases in 2006 and 14 cases in 2007. The total to date for 2008 is 17 confirmed cases and three probable cases of pertussis.

Pertussis Symptoms:

Pertussis is a serious disease that can lead to pneumonia, encephalopathy or death in infants and unvaccinated children. Adults, teens and vaccinated children often have mild symptoms that mimic bronchitis or asthma. Adults and adolescents are usually the source of the disease in infants.

The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) would like to remind providers to consider pertussis as a differential diagnosis in patients presenting with the following symptoms:

- Prolonged cough
- Cough with paroxysms (uncontrollable bursts of coughing)
- Whoop
- Post-tussive gagging/vomiting

People presenting with the above symptoms should be considered as presumptive pertussis cases and should be treated and advised to stay home until after five days of antibiotics or pertussis has been ruled out. All suspect and confirmed cases of pertussis should be immediately reported to the North Dakota Department of Health.

Testing Procedures:

Testing for pertussis should include nasopharyngeal specimens for both culture and polymerase chain reaction (PCR). Pertussis testing kits are available at most major medical centers and local public health units in North Dakota and from the Division of Laboratory Services of the NDDoH. The cost for pertussis testing by the NDDoH is \$45.

The NDDoH does not recommend testing of non-symptomatic persons; i.e., if a person does not have a cough, there is no need for testing.

Treating Contacts:

All persons identified as contacts to confirmed pertussis cases should be prophylaxed. Only the antibiotics listed on the attached “Treatment Recommendations” are effective in treating pertussis. The NDDoH will refer contacts to their primary care provider for evaluation and treatment. Symptomatic contacts should be prescribed antibiotics and advised to exclude themselves from all activities (e.g., day care, work, school) until medication has been taken for five days. Guidelines for treatment of pertussis are attached. Close contacts do not need to be excluded from activities if no symptoms are present.

Vaccine:

Diphtheria, tetanus and acellular pertussis vaccine (DTaP) should be administered routinely to infants at 2, 4, 6 and 15 to 18 months of age and a booster dose of DTaP should be given at 4 to 6 years of age. DTaP is required to attend school and day care. DTaP vaccine should not be given to children seven years of age and older.

Pertussis outbreaks highlight the need for pertussis vaccination in adults and adolescents. Tetanus, diphtheria, and acellular pertussis vaccine (Tdap) is routinely recommended for adolescents 11 to 12 years of age. Tdap is required to be administered to all adolescents entering middle school. Adolescents 13 to 18 years of age and adults also are recommended to receive a dose of Tdap.

The North Dakota Department of Health is now offering Tdap vaccine for administration to new parents/guardians, child-care providers, and expecting fathers. The state-supplied vaccine may be administered regardless of insurance status. This campaign is an effort to protect young infants from pertussis. Vaccinating adult contacts may reduce the risk of transmission to infants and other susceptible contacts. If health-care providers are interested in enrolling in this program in order to receive state-supplied Tdap, please contact the NDDoH Immunization Program at 701.328.3386 or toll-free at 800.472.2180.

A fact sheet about pertussis can be found at www.ndhealth.gov under the current issues box.

For more information, please contact the NDDoH Division of Disease Control at 701.328.2378 or toll-free at 800.472.2180.

Categories of Health Alert messages:

- *Health Alert conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.*
- *Health Advisory provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.*
- *Health Update provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; no immediate action necessary.*
- *Health Information provides general information that is not necessarily considered to be of an emergent nature.*

This message is being sent to local public health units, clinics, hospitals, physicians, tribal health, North Dakota Nurses Association, North Dakota Long Term Care Association, North Dakota Healthcare Association, North Dakota Medical Association, North Dakota EMS Association and hospital public information officers.