



# WARREN COUNTY HEALTH DISTRICT

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## Media Advisory

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Pertussis

The Warren County Health District (WCHD) is urging the public to stay up to date with immunizations, especially for pertussis (whooping cough). WCHD has identified an increase in pertussis cases in the county. In 2023, there have been 15 cases, including 14 that have been in the last month. By comparison, there was one case in 2022.

Whooping cough, is highly contagious and is usually spread by coughing or sneezing while in close contact with others, who then breathe in the pertussis bacteria. It can cause serious illness in people of all ages but is most dangerous for babies. Symptoms of whooping cough usually develop within 5 to 10 days after you come into contact with the bacteria that cause it. Sometimes symptoms do not develop for as long as 3 weeks. Whooping Cough symptoms can be classified into three stages: Stage 1, 2, and 3. Stage 1, or early symptoms can last 1-2 weeks and include:

- Runny or stuffed up nose
- Low-grade fever (less than 100.4F)
- Mild, Occasional cough (babies do not do this)
- Apnea (life threatening pauses in breathing) and cyanosis (turning blue or purple) in babies and young children

Many times, in the early stages of whooping cough, it is very easy to think it is just a common cold. Early testing is important since the antibiotics used to treat the illness is most effective in the first stage of pertussis. Antibiotics are not effective once the “whooping” starts. Stage two symptoms can begin one to two weeks after symptom onset, and can last anywhere from 1-10 weeks. During this time, someone affected by whooping cough will develop rapid, violent, and uncontrolled coughing fits. As the illness continues, these coughing fits will increase in frequency and intensity. Stage three is recovery, which can be slow, as the cough becomes milder and less common as someone gets better, but they can return if someone develops another respiratory infection.

Whooping cough can cause serious and sometimes life-threatening complications in babies. This is especially true within the first 6 months of life. It is important to know that some babies with whooping cough don't cough at all. Instead, it causes them to stop breathing and turn blue. If their mothers are vaccinated in the third trimester (27-36 weeks), newborns are offered some protection.

The best way to prevent whooping cough is to get vaccinated. Two vaccines in the United States help prevent whooping cough: DTaP and Tdap. These vaccines also provide protection against

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tetanus and diphtheria. These vaccines cannot give you whooping cough, tetanus, or diphtheria. WCHD offers both of these vaccinations. If you are unsure of if you need the Tdap vaccination or have not received one in the last 10 years, and need to get scheduled, call 513-695-1229.

For people exposed to whooping cough, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends preventive antibiotics only if they:

- Live with the person who has been diagnosed with whooping cough.
- Are at increased risk for serious disease (e.g., babies, people with certain medical conditions) or will have close contact with someone who is at increased risk for serious disease (e.g., women in their third trimester of pregnancy, people who work with or care for high risk individuals).

If you've been exposed to the bacteria that causes whooping cough, talk to your doctor about whether you need preventive antibiotics. This is especially important if there is a baby or pregnant woman in your household or you plan to have contact with a baby or pregnant woman.

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