

FOR RELEASE  
June 27, 2017

## **Pertussis cases confirmed in Whitehorse**

Yukon's Chief Medical Officer of Health Dr. Brendan Hanley advises Yukoners that pertussis (whooping cough) has returned to Yukon with several recent confirmed cases in Whitehorse.

Yukoners are encouraged to ensure their vaccinations are up to date. Pregnant women are recommended to have a pertussis vaccine in their third trimester.

It is expected that pertussis will spread further throughout Yukon as it has in the past. Parents and caregivers should be aware of the signs and symptoms of pertussis in their children and ensure that they are up to date with their immunizations.

Parents and patients are reminded to call 811 for more information or check with their family physician, Whitehorse Health Centre or community health centre for immunization information. Individuals who think they may have come into contact with the disease should contact their health care provider, or if sick, visit the emergency department at Whitehorse, Dawson City or Watson Lake hospitals or their local community health centre if living in rural Yukon. When planning to visit a clinic with cough or other symptoms that might be pertussis, make sure you call ahead first.

### **Quick facts**

To prevent further spread and to protect the infants and babies who are most at risk from complications of pertussis, the Yukon vaccine program recommends the following:

- Pregnant women should get a pertussis-containing vaccine during their current pregnancy regardless of whether they have already received the vaccine before pregnancy or in other pregnancies. Tdap (pertussis vaccine combined with tetanus and diphtheria) is considered safe to give in pregnancy. When given in the last trimester of pregnancy the vaccine can help to protect the newborn baby from pertussis. Young babies are most at risk from complications of pertussis. New mothers who were not updated in pregnancy should also be updated as soon as possible to protect their infants.
- One dose of the pertussis (Tdap) vaccine is recommended for all adults. Adults living in households with pregnant women or young children are particularly encouraged to be up to date on their pertussis vaccination.
- Health care workers, day care workers, teachers, and school staff and volunteers should ensure that their vaccination status is up to date. All adults should normally have received one dose of pertussis vaccine in adulthood.
- Note that past or even recent whooping cough infection is not considered to protect against new pertussis infections. People who have had whooping cough should still be up to date with vaccination.

### **Information on whooping cough:**

- Whooping cough is a very contagious disease of the lungs and throat. It is caused by a bacteria found in the mouth, nose and throat of an infected person. Whooping cough is spread when the sick person coughs or sneezes the germ into the air, where other people can breathe it in. If exposed people become infected, it takes about seven to 10 days for them to develop symptoms of whooping cough.
- Early symptoms are like those of a cold (sneezing, runny nose, a low fever and a mild cough), but over the next week or two, the cough gets worse leading to longer spells of coughing that often end with a whoop or crowing sound when the person breathes in. The coughing may be so bad that it makes a person gag or throw up. Sometimes a thick, clear mucous is spit out. This cough can last up to a month or two, and happens more at night.

### **Learn more:** Yukon Immunization: Pertussis

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*News Release #17-140*



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