

NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Health Department responds to pertussis cases

(Lawrence, KS) – The Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department has been notified of several pertussis (whooping cough) cases occurring in the past month.

Six of the seven cases have involved unvaccinated children in Lawrence day care facilities. The Health Department has responded by providing treatment and prevention recommendations to the families of the ill children, families of other children in the affected day cares and area physicians. Other Douglas County day cares have been notified of the cases and the exclusion policies for unvaccinated, exposed children.

Pertussis is a contagious, bacterial, respiratory disease spread by coughing or sneezing in close contact with others. Parents, older siblings or other caregivers (who may not know they have pertussis) can infect infants with the illness.

The symptoms of pertussis begin much like a common cold:

- Runny nose or congestion
- Sneezing
- Occasionally a mild cough or fever
- Infants and children with the disease may cough violently and rapidly, over and over, until the air is gone from their lungs and they're forced to inhale with a loud "whooping" sound.

Pertussis may be mild in older children and adults, but in younger children, the illness can be complicated by pneumonia and occasionally brain inflammation. In rare cases (one out of 200), pertussis can cause death (especially in children age 1 or younger). For more information, see the pertussis fact sheet on the Health Department's website: www.ldchealth.org/factsheet.htm.

Vaccination is the best protection against the disease. DTaP is the vaccination against pertussis in young children and Tdap is the vaccination for ages 7 and up. If your child needs to receive an immunization, the Health Department can provide this vaccine. A fee will apply. A parent needs to accompany the child for the vaccination to sign the consent form and receive information.

If you have any questions or if you or your child is experiencing pertussis symptoms, please contact your physician or the Health Department at (785) 843-0721 and ask for a communicable disease (CD) nurse.

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