



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Pertussis Outbreak - Update

East Wenatchee, WA – Chelan-Douglas Health District (CDHD) continues its investigation and monitoring of local pertussis cases. To date we have seventeen (17) cases that have been confirmed with a positive lab result or have clinical symptoms consistent with pertussis and exposure to a lab-confirmed case.

Chelan-Douglas Health District continues to receive reports of suspected cases throughout the community. As of March 6 2024, we have received laboratory confirmation of an additional case of Pertussis with no link to the other known cases. This supports our suspicion that pertussis is circulating more broadly throughout the community.

[Pertussis](#) (whooping cough) is a well-known and serious respiratory illness caused by the bacteria *Bordetella pertussis*. Whooping cough spreads very easily by coughing and sneezing. It begins with cold-like symptoms and develops into a bad cough. Coughing spells can be severe, sometimes ending in gagging or vomiting. Some kids also may have a high-pitched “whoop” after they cough, which is how the disease got its common name (although infants may not cough at all, and some teens and adults don’t have a “whoop” after they cough). People that have been vaccinated for pertussis may have milder symptoms, but it is important to know that they can still get and transmit pertussis. Complications of pertussis include pneumonia, syncope (passing out), seizures, apnea (stopping breathing) and death. These severe complications are most common in infants, with half of infected infants requiring hospitalization. Pertussis infection during pregnancy can affect the fetus and result in newborn complications.

Person to person spread of pertussis occurs through large respiratory droplets, and is most likely among people that live together or people who spend time together indoors. Wearing medical-grade surgical masks can prevent the spread of droplets and protect individuals from passing on pertussis and decrease the risk of contracting pertussis.

The most effective preventive measure against pertussis infection, transmission and complications is routine [vaccination](#).

We continue to recommend to the general public that individuals with the following symptoms or exposure should contact their healthcare provider:

1. Any respiratory illness with a cough:
 - greater than 2 weeks duration, or
 - that is paroxysmal, or
 - includes an inspiratory whoop/gasping, or

- has post-tussive gagging/emesis, or
 - is worse at night
2. Any respiratory symptoms that develop after known contact with a person with pertussis
 3. Known household or other close contact with a person with pertussis
 4. Exposure to pertussis and the high-risk conditions of age <1 year or pregnancy
 5. Exposure to pertussis and contact with family members or others with high-risk conditions of age <1 year or pregnancy

CDHD recommends practicing good respiratory hygiene:

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Throw away used tissues in the wastebasket right away.
- 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 sanitizer.
- Talk to your healthcare provider if you have been exposed to Pertussis.
- Anyone who is not up to date on their pertussis vaccination schedule seek care with their healthcare provider to update their immunization status.
- If you are experiencing respiratory illness symptoms, stay home for 24 hours and seek healthcare evaluation if symptoms do not improve.

Chelan-Douglas Health District continues to work closely with school officials, local healthcare providers and the Washington State Department of Health to respond, monitor and assist in care of affected individuals and their families. Prevention of severe illness among those most vulnerable to pertussis is our highest priority.

Resources:

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

[Washington State Department of Health](#)

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