



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Idaho Public Health Districts

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April 2014

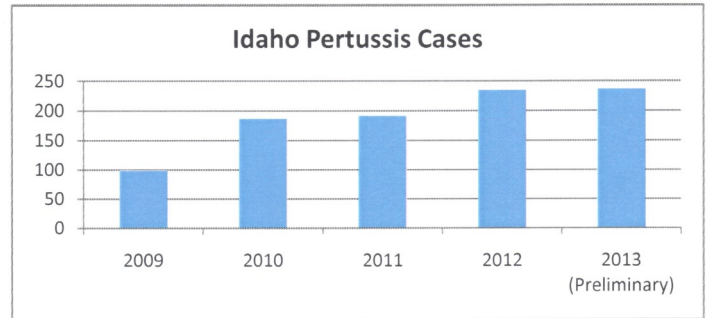
PERTUSSIS CASES CONTINUE TO SURGE

Pertussis, also known as whooping cough, is a vaccine-preventable disease. It is a highly contagious respiratory disease that can cause serious illness in infants, children, and adults. Since 2009, Idaho has experienced a 139% increase in the number of pertussis cases reported annually, going from 99 cases in 2009 to 237 cases in 2013. For the first two months of 2014, the number of reported cases exceeds what was reported for the same time period last year. Tragically, since 2009, two infants in Idaho have lost their lives as a result of this disease. Idaho is not alone in dealing with this challenging disease. Nationwide, there have been significant increases in pertussis cases in recent years. Both California and Washington have experienced epidemics, which resulted in the death of 10 babies in California in 2009-2010.

Idaho's Public Health Districts are the front line of defense against this highly transmissible and potentially life-threatening disease. Public Health works diligently to educate health care providers and the general public about the importance of vaccinations. They track cases and work closely with individuals, schools, and daycares to protect against the spread of the disease. They share the information gathered in disease investigations with state and federal agencies as well as with local medical facilities and infection control practitioners.

Unlike the flu, pertussis has no specific season. It is usually spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes while in close proximity with others, who then breathe in the whooping cough bacteria. Or, people may also be infected when they touch droplets from an infected person, and then touch their nose or mouth.

Symptoms may vary, depending on age. In general, pertussis begins with cold-like symptoms, such as sneezing, runny nose, a mild cough, and a low-grade fever. After



one to two weeks, the cough becomes more severe, especially at night. Coughing spells may be violent and uncontrollable, causing victims to literally gasp for air, vomit, or turn blue because they can't breathe. This gasping, or "whooping" sound, is where the term whooping cough originated.

Adults and adolescents are commonly the source of infection for younger children and infants. Infants under one year are not old enough to be fully-vaccinated against pertussis and are most likely to experience severe, even life-threatening, complications if they develop the disease. Therefore, it is critical that everyone in close contact with infants be current on their pertussis vaccine.

Pertussis vaccines (DTaP—diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis—for infants/children and Tdap—tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis—for adolescents/adults) are available at most healthcare providers, including all seven health districts in Idaho, and are covered by most insurance providers. Even though pertussis vaccines are effective, they are not perfect. Getting sick with pertussis or getting pertussis vaccines does not provide lifelong protection. Most fully-immunized children are at a lower risk for contracting pertussis, so the best way to protect against it is immunization.

HEALTHY PEOPLE IN HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

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