



Public Service Announcement

November 27, 2015

For immediate release

Vaccination is encouraged to prevent whooping cough

Parents are encouraged to get their infants vaccinated for pertussis, also known as whooping cough, because of an increase in cases being seen in the province including the north.

Pertussis is a highly contagious respiratory infection caused by bacteria spread by direct contact with droplets from the nose and throat of an infected person. The bacteria spreads easily when people are in close contact in households, classrooms and childcare centres.

“Pertussis can be a serious illness in infants under 12 months of age,” says Dr. James Irvine, Chief Medical Health Officer in northern Saskatchewan. “It can lead to breathing difficulties, hospitalization and sometimes death, even with treatment.”

Vaccination is the best way to prevent pertussis and is given to children at two, four, six and 15 to 18 months of age, and again at four to six years of age. Children in Grade 8 should get a booster dose of the vaccine, and adults should talk to their public health nurse about receiving Tdap when they are due for their 10-year adult tetanus and diphtheria booster.

To better protect babies, the Saskatchewan Ministry of Health and Northern Saskatchewan's Medical Health Officers recommend that pregnant women, between 26 and 36 weeks of pregnancy, get immunized with Tdap if they have never received Tdap as adults.

Pregnant women who get vaccinated have the added benefit of transferring the protective effect of their vaccination antibodies to their unborn child through antibodies. This helps protect the baby before he or she can be vaccinated at two months old and will help keep the mother from getting sick and infecting the baby. Family members, medical providers and others who will be around infants should be up to date with immunization.

For more information on pertussis, including signs and symptoms, go to:

http://www.pophealthnorthsask.ca/mrws/filedriver/CD_Immunization/Pertussis_Fact_Sheet.pdf .

You can also contact your local public health nurse or call HealthLine at 811.

If you have technical issues by dialing 811, you can call 1-877-800-0002 to be connected with Healthline.