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With whooping cough on the rise, health officials urge vaccination

Milton-Freewater, Oregon — UCo Health staff are looking into a number of pertussis reports in Milton-Freewater. You may know pertussis as whooping cough. Officials remind you that it is important to keep vaccines current.

A type of bacteria that spread easily through the droplets of an infected person's cough causes whooping cough. It usually starts like a cold with a cough that gets worse over one to two weeks. The coughing comes in fits. A "whooping" noise, vomiting or difficulty catching one's breath may occur after a coughing fit. The cough is often worse at night. Cough medicines don't stop the cough. There is usually no fever. Older kids and adults may have mild symptoms but can still spread the illness. Even when symptoms are mild, infected people can spread the illness to young kids and babies who are especially vulnerable to the disease.

Consult a health care provider if you are having fits of coughing, even if you have had the vaccine. Pregnant women (especially in their third trimester) should see a provider if they have been exposed to someone with pertussis. A provider should see babies under the age of 1 if they have been exposed to someone with pertussis. Providers can often treat pertussis with antibiotics. Antibiotics may also help prevent it among pertussis-exposed people.

"Whooping cough can make babies and young children very ill and the disease spreads easily in groups," said Dr. Jonathan Hitzman, Health Officer for UCo Health. "It is important for those with a cough to avoid pregnant woman and children under the age of one."

UCo Health will be offering pertussis containing vaccines during a clinic at Gib Olinger Elementary School on Thursday November 8th from 2pm to 6pm. "We encourage everyone who is not up-to-date on their pertussis vaccine to come, regardless of insurance status, and receive a booster dose," said Joseph Fiumara, UCo Health

Director. Please bring your immunization record and insurance information, if you have them, to the vaccination clinic. Flu shots will also be made available.

Babies and children should get five doses of DTaP for maximum protection. Children receive doses at ages 2, 4 and 6 months, at 15 through 18 months, and again at 4 through 6 years. Preteens at 11 or 12 years old get a booster dose of Tdap. Teens or adults who didn't get Tdap as a preteen should get one dose. Getting Tdap is especially important for pregnant women during the third trimester of **each** pregnancy.

Good hygiene can also help prevent the spread of pertussis. It also can help prevent the spread of many other diseases. Adults and children should always:

- Cover coughs and sneezes with the inside of the elbow.
- Wash hands often and thoroughly.
- Stay home when sick.

Whooping cough is common in the United States. The number of cases peaks every 3 to 5 years and there are frequent outbreaks. There were 10 cases of pertussis in Umatilla County in the previous 5 years. Many more cases go unreported. The main goal of controlling pertussis outbreaks is to decrease the amount of disease and death among babies.

To find out more about pertussis (whooping cough), go to <https://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/index.html>.

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