

December 4, 2014

Follow AHS_Media on Twitter 

Whooping cough outbreak declared in AHS Central Zone

RED DEER – Due to a sustained increase in the number of cases of whooping cough (pertussis) confirmed in the Central Zone of Alberta Health Services (AHS), AHS has declared a pertussis outbreak in Central Zone and is offering additional immunization appointment opportunities for at-risk individuals.

A bacterial infection that causes severe coughing that lasts for weeks, pertussis can lead to pneumonia, convulsions, brain damage and even death. Infants six months of age and younger are at greatest risk for these serious complications.

Of the 107 cases of pertussis confirmed in the Central Zone in 2014 to-date, seven cases have required hospitalization.

Pertussis can be treated, most successfully if caught early; however, immunization can safely prevent disease and, if it does occur, reduce symptoms and spread of the disease.

In Alberta, pertussis immunizations are offered – free of charge – through Alberta’s routine childhood immunization program. A series of doses is recommended, starting at two months of age, and again at four, six and 18 months; at four to six years; and again in Grade 9. Following this schedule ensures protection is up-to-date. Albertans who have not received a dose of pertussis vaccine since turning 18 years of age are eligible to receive a single dose.

AHS has proactively increased the number of immunization appointments available in Central Zone to reduce infant infection rates. These appointments are specifically intended for the following Central Zone residents:

- infants and pre-school aged children who are not up-to-date on immunizations;
- caregivers and close contacts of infants such as parents, grandparents, nannies, child care staff (e.g. daycare centres and family day homes);
- health care workers;
- women who are at least, or greater than, 26 weeks pregnant (Immunizing women at or after 26 weeks of pregnancy is safe, and increases protection for newborn infants by minimizing risk of infection in those around them and giving them antibodies transferred during pregnancy).

Of the above target groups, pregnant women and adult caregivers/close contacts may also be able to access immunization through their physicians. Please call ahead to confirm availability.

Individuals uncertain of their child’s immunization history can contact their local community health centre to discuss.

Anyone who suspects they, or a family member, may be sick with pertussis should stay at home and call a family physician or Health Link Alberta, toll-free at 1-866-408-LINK (5465), before seeking medical care. When prescribed treatment, cases should stay home from work, school or childcare until five days of antibiotics have been completed.

Follow AHS_Media on Twitter 

Additional information about pertussis is available through AHS' childhood immunization website, immunizealberta.ca, at: <http://immunizealberta.ca/i-need-know-more/common-questions/whooping-cough>.

Alberta Health Services is the provincial health authority responsible for planning and delivering health supports and services for more than four million adults and children living in Alberta. Its mission is to provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans.

- 30 -

For media inquiries, contact:

Heather Kipling
AHS Communications
403-341-8687

Follow AHS_Media on Twitter 

Alberta Health Services is the provincial health authority responsible for planning and delivering health supports and services for more than four million adults and children living in Alberta. Its mission is to provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans.

- 30 -

For media inquiries, contact:

Heather Kipling
AHS Communications
403-341-8687