Pertussis E-Message: Child Care Organizations

Preventing Whooping Cough in Child Care Facilities
Staff Should Get Tdap Vaccine to Protect Themselves and the Children They Care for.

Missouri has seen an increase in confirmed and probable cases of pertussis through the first half of 2012. Pertussis (whooping cough) is a highly contagious, vaccine-preventable respiratory disease that can be passed easily from person-to-person. Pertussis is caused by a bacteria found in the mouth, nose and throat of an infected person and is spread when that person coughs, sneezes or talks. Pertussis is a year-round disease that typically peaks in the fall and winter during cold and flu season. The best way to protect against pertussis is vaccination.

Infants and Children: The recommended pertussis vaccine for children is called DTaP. For maximum protection against pertussis, children need five DTaP shots.
•The first three shots are given at 2, 4, and 6 months of age.
•The fourth shot is given at 15 through 18 months of age.
•The fifth shot (booster dose) is given when a child enters school, at 4 through 6 years of age.

11 years through Adulthood: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends a single booster (Tdap) for 11 year olds through adulthood and especially for those who are in close contact with a baby, including parents, siblings, grandparents and caregivers. Tdap is required for students beginning in the eighth grade.

Pertussis most commonly effects infants and young children and can be fatal, especially in babies under one year of age. Unvaccinated children are more likely to get pertussis than fully immunized children. Adults are responsible for transmitting more than half of the whooping cough cases diagnosed in infants and young children.

Pertussis usually starts with cold and flu-like symptoms and after about two weeks, the coughing becomes more severe. Pertussis is known for uncontrollable coughing which can make it hard to breathe. After a coughing episode, someone with pertussis needs to take deep breaths which often times can result in a "whooping" sound. After an episode, the patient commonly vomits and feels very tired. Between episodes, there may be no signs of illness. Pertussis can last for weeks and even months if not treated early.

Talk to your staff and the families enrolled at your facility about getting vaccinated against pertussis today!

For more information about pertussis, visit the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services' web site at www.health.mo.gov/pertussis.