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ODH URGES OHIOANS TO VACCINATE AGAINST PERTUSSIS

“Whooping cough” sickens hundreds annually

COLUMBUS – Pertussis – also known as whooping cough – sickens hundreds of Ohioans every year and the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) wants to help you protect yourself and your loved ones from this vaccine-preventable disease.

“This common and potentially serious illness can be prevented with vaccine,” said ODH Director Alvin D. Jackson, M.D. “Please see your doctor to see if pertussis vaccine is recommended for you and your loved ones.”

ODH recommends children be vaccinated with the diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis vaccine at 2, 4 and 6 months; again at 12 to 15 months; with an additional dose at 4 to 6 years. Because protection can weaken over time, a booster shot of the diphtheria, tetanus and acellular pertussis is recommended between the ages of 11 and 12.

There are vaccines licensed for individuals 10 to 64 years old; please check with your medical providers to see whether they are fully protected.

Pertussis is spread when a patient coughs or sneezes while in close contact with others, who may then inhale the bacteria. The disease is similar to the common cold at first with severe coughing after one to two weeks. Children often experience violent, rapid coughs that forces air from the lungs, creating a loud, “whooping” sound – hence the name whooping cough. Pertussis kills an estimated 10 to 20 Americans every year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

People with these symptoms should see their physicians right away, as antibiotics can limit the spread of disease.

Ohio reported 346 cases of pertussis in 2001; 441 in 2002; 328 in 2003; 885 in 2004; 1,094 in 2005; 594 in 2006; 837 in 2007; and 845 in 2008.

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