

Whooping Cough Cases Rising Dramatically

Wednesday, 18 July 2012

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

State

health officials are advising residents to make sure they are up to date on their vaccinations, especially ones that prevent the disease commonly known as whooping cough.

Pertussis, an infection of the respiratory system, gets its nickname, whooping cough, from the aspiratory whoop sound that often follows coughing fits during the last six weeks of infection. Dr. Joe McLaughlin is a state epidemiologist and chief of the Alaska Section of Epidemiology. He said this year the United States has seen a rise in the number of whooping cough cases.

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--(Whooping Cough 1 :07 ".....Coughing.....")

That's the sound of Pertussis, an infection of the respiratory system that gets its nickname, whooping cough, from the aspiratory whoop sound that often follows coughing fits during the last six weeks of infection. Dr. Joe McLaughlin is a state epidemiologist and chief of the Alaska Section of Epidemiology. He said this year the United States has seen a rise in the number of whooping cough cases.

--(Whooping Cough 2 :27 " So far to date, as of July 9th, the CDC is reporting that we've had 17,000 in the U.S. and there are three states in particular that have been hit quite hard with pertussis outbreaks: Washington state, our closest neighbor, and Minnesota and Wisconsin. All three of those states are reporting cases in the thousands.")

McLaughlin said in previous years all of those states have had less than 400 outbreaks for the entire year. While Alaska is far from an epidemic, he said the number of instances has also risen in the last frontier.

--(Whooping Cough 3 :29 " In Alaska, last year we had 24 cases reported, and this year we have almost double that, I think we're at about 40 cases. So we've seen a little bump in instances of pertussis here in Alaska. And most of the cases have occurred in the Anchorage Mat-Su area and we have had a handful of cases in the interior and a few in the Southwest and I think one in the gulf coast region.")

Despite low numbers in Alaska, McLaughlin said our proximity to Washington state does make residents more at risk for spread, especially considering the amount of air travel between Anchorage and Seattle. He advises residents to be vigilant about respiratory hygiene and preventing the disease.

--(Whooping Cough 4 :15 " By far, in a way, the very best way to do this is to get vaccinated. We're very fortunate that there are two effective vaccines for pertussis. One is for children and infants, and the other is for preteens, teens and adults.")

McLaughlin said vaccines cost around \$20-40 without insurance. He said they are readily available at most health clinics throughout the state.

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