

WHOOPING COUGH EPIDEMIC

The United States is experiencing the worst whooping cough outbreak in half a decade. According to the Centers for Disease Control, more than 21,000 cases of whooping cough have been reported this year-twice the number reported in 2011.

The states of Washington, Wisconsin, Minnesota and New York have experienced severe outbreaks. The disease has killed 13 victims since the start of 2012; all of them infants.

Pertussis, or whooping cough, is a highly contagious upper respiratory disease. It is caused by bacteria that produce uncontrollable, violent coughing. The coughing makes it hard to breathe. The disease acquired its' name by the deep "whooping" sound produced when the patient attempts to take a deep breath. Vomiting may occur after the coughing spell.

When an infected person coughs or sneezes, tiny droplets which contain the bacteria travel through the air, and the disease is easily spread from person to person. Whooping cough can affect people of any age.

Before vaccines were widely available and required, whooping cough was most common in infants and young children. Now that most children are immunized before entering school, a higher percentage of cases are being seen among adolescents and adults.

Sturgeon R-V Schools requires this vaccination. Last Spring, parents and guardians of 8th and 9th grade students were notified about required T-dap vaccinations. Presently, our nursing staff is monitoring compliance to assure our students are protected.

Doctors believe that whooping cough vaccine declines in effectiveness as people age. It is especially important for parents and grandparents to receive a booster vaccine when they are expecting a new baby because babies are susceptible to this disease before they are fully immunized. Dtap vaccine can be safely administered to infants at ages 2 months, 4 months, 6 months, 15-18 months and at 4-6 years. T-dap is given around ages 11-12 and every 10 years

For more information talk with your health care provider, your local Health department, or call one of your school nurses.

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