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HEALTH OFFICIALS REMIND EVERYONE TO VACCINATE AGAINST WHOOPING COUGH



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For immunizations appointments call 850-595-6500, option 2

Pensacola, Fla. – The Florida Department of Health in Escambia County (FDOH-Escambia) reminds everyone to get vaccinated, and stay vaccinated, against pertussis. Pertussis, commonly known as “whooping cough,” is a vaccine-preventable illness, but can be highly contagious to non-vaccinated and under-vaccinated individuals. The disease is easily passed among individuals in close contact with one another. Pertussis can be especially dangerous to newborn infants who are too young to get vaccinated. This illness is also serious for people with weakened immune systems and for older adults. To date in 2016, there have been four confirmed cases of pertussis in Escambia County, Florida.

“Pertussis easily spreads within families and in other settings where there are close contacts among individuals, such as households, schools, and group child care situations”, said FDOH-Escambia’s Director, Dr. John Lanza. “Because pertussis can be so dangerous for infants, it is important that as many people as possible get vaccinated and stay vaccinated.”

Individuals aged six weeks and older are eligible for the pertussis vaccine. Many teens and adults were vaccinated for pertussis when they were a child. However, if there is going to be a newborn in their home, or if they are going to be around older adults or individuals with poor immune function, previously-vaccinated persons may need a vaccine booster. Individuals should talk with their physician about getting vaccinated. The vaccine is available at FDOH-Escambia and from many private physicians.

Pertussis is very contagious and is spread from person to person through the droplets from a cough. The main symptom is a cough that lasts for two weeks to several months. The cough can be very serious. Individuals may be unable to catch their breath and begin to turn blue. Severe coughs can also lead to vomiting, sleep loss, weight loss, nose bleeds, rib fractures, hernia and even pneumonia. In infants, the cough may have a “whoop” sound at the end. Individuals who have these symptoms, and those who have a cough and have been exposed to someone who has been diagnosed with pertussis, should see a doctor. Additional information about the disease, what infected individuals should do, and vaccination recommendations can be found at EscambiaHealth.com. Persons needing the vaccine or vaccine booster, can check with their personal physician or local pharmacy, or can call FDOH-Escambia, at 850-595-6500, option 2, to schedule an appointment.

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