

March 26, 2012

INCREASING PERTUSSIS (WHOOPIING COUGH) ACTIVITY IN VANCOUVER COASTAL HEALTH REGION

Free Adacel (Tdap) Vaccine now available

To Parents and Employees in the School Community

There has been an increase in pertussis in our region since January 2012. More than 38 cases have occurred in communities across VCH as of March 26th. There were no cases in the same period last year. As well, the pertussis outbreak in Fraser Health region continues with over 160 cases.

FREE pertussis vaccine (Adacel or Tdap) is now available for the following people who have not had a pertussis shot in the last 5 years:

- **All pregnant women and their partners**
- **Everyone in contact with babies 18 months of age and younger**
- **All Aboriginal people**

Pertussis is a very serious, contagious illness. **Babies less than one year of age can get very sick or even die from pertussis** (To see how severe pertussis can be in young babies, and to understand what the whooping cough sounds like, you can look on You Tube under "*babies with whooping cough*").

Getting vaccine protects you, your family and those you care for. Vaccine is available from family doctors, some pharmacists, and public health clinics.

Please review your children's immunization record to make sure they are up to date. Children routinely receive pertussis vaccine at 2, 4, 6, 18 months of age, at 4 - 6 years, and in Grade 9. It is always important that babies and children get their shots on time.

Early symptoms of whooping cough starts like a cold (sneezing, runny nose, a low fever and a mild cough). Severe coughing spells start within a week or two. The cough often ends with a whoop or crowing sound when the person breathes in. Adults and teens usually do not make the whooping sound when they cough, so making a diagnosis is more difficult. Your doctor or nurse practitioner can do a swab test from the nose to confirm it.

For more information go to www.vch.ca or Call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1.

If you require further information, please contact the nurse on call at 604-983-6700.

Sincerely,



Brian A. O'Connor, MD, MHSc
Medical Health Officer
Vancouver Coastal Health, North Shore