



Press Release
May 14, 2019
For Immediate Release

More Than 100 Pertussis Cases Confirmed in Missoula County

Re: exposure possible; school personnel and parents need to stay alert

Missoula County has exceeded 100 confirmed pertussis cases, according to Cindy Farr, Health Promotion Director at the Missoula City-County Health Department. Cases have now been reported across all ages, from infants to adults.

The duration of the outbreak means it is possible for people who were exposed earlier in the outbreak to be re-exposed.

“Antibiotic therapy only protects against pertussis for about 12 days,” Farr said. “Everyone needs to stay vigilant and seek medical care if they develop symptoms.”

Important guidelines to protect against the illness and help stop the spread of pertussis include:

- Early pertussis symptoms include runny nose, sneezing, mild to severe cough and a low fever.
- Pertussis is dangerous for high-risk groups, which include infants, pregnant women and people who are immunocompromised.
- Symptoms in infants are often atypical and severe, including difficulty breathing and blue lips.
- People who have been vaccinated generally have less severe symptoms, but they can still spread the disease.
- Healthcare providers can test for pertussis and effectively treat it with antibiotics.
- Anyone who has been exposed to someone who has pertussis should watch for symptoms and seek medical care if symptoms appear.

Strict exclusion guidelines are in place to reduce the amount of time a possibly contagious person might be at school or work:

- People who have been exposed and have symptoms must stay away from school or work and avoid contact with others until test results come back negative, or until they have completed five days of antibiotics. It is especially important to stay away from

people in high-risk groups: infants, pregnant women and anyone who is immunocompromised.

- People in high-risk groups who have been exposed should seek medical care even if they do not have symptoms. Their health care provider may decide to treat them preventatively.
- People who have been exposed but have no symptoms and who are not in a high-risk group do not need to be excluded from work or school, but they should remain on the alert for symptoms.

“We know this outbreak is difficult for families and schools,” Farr said. “We appreciate the help and understanding we have received from school staff, parents, kids and healthcare providers, including area nurses who answered our call for help this past week. Your continued cooperation and vigilance are essential to reducing its spread, especially to high-risk individuals in our community.”

For more information or to set up an interview, contact:

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