



Knox County Health Department

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Knox County Sees Recent Increase in Pertussis Cases

Knox County, Tenn. – The Knox County Health Department is reporting an increase in Pertussis infections, also known as whooping cough, in Knox County. At present, cases are more than five times what is seen in a typical year. This increase is also being seen nationwide.

Whooping cough is a respiratory disease characterized by severe coughing. Coughing often lasts longer than two weeks and may have a distinctive “whooping” sound. Many children will often vomit after coughing. Rarely, young infants may stop breathing. It is passed from person to person much like the flu, primarily through close personal contact.

The best way to prevent whooping cough is to make sure your family is vaccinated. Nearly all the current cases are affecting children who are not vaccinated. According to the Centers for Disease Control, children who are not vaccinated against whooping cough (pertussis) are eight times more likely to become infected than those who are vaccinated.

“Infants are most at risk for severe disease, which is why it’s so important that the rest of us do everything we can to protect them,” said KCHD Public Health Officer Dr. Megan Edwards. “Although pertussis infections can be treated with antibiotics, the most effective treatment is prevention. Our best tool is for families and infants to receive a vaccine that has been safely administered for decades.”

Those with questions or concerns should contact their medical provider or child’s pediatrician. Vaccines are also available at the Knox County Health Department. Appointments can be made by calling 865-215-5555.

About Knox County Health Department

The first health department in Tennessee to achieve national voluntary accreditation by the Public Health Accreditation Board, the Knox County Health Department (KCHD) is dedicated to ensuring the conditions in which every resident can be healthy. For more information, visit <http://www.knoxcounty.org/health>.

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