



May 15, 2018

Navajo Nation Health Advisory – Pertussis (Whooping Cough)

Window Rock, AZ – A Navajo Nation public health advisory is being distributed to provide information about Pertussis (Whooping Cough) due to the current outbreak and quick spread of the disease in portions of McKinley and San Juan Counties within Navajo Nation.

What is Pertussis? Pertussis, also called whooping cough, is a very contagious (easily spread) respiratory illness, affecting the lungs and breathing. It is spread by:

- Coughing and sneezing while in close contact with others.
- Spending a lot of time near one another where you share breathing space.
- Infected persons can spread the disease for several weeks. People in the early stage of illness, up to about 2 weeks after the cough begins, are the most contagious.
- Many babies are infected by older siblings, parents, or caregivers who might not even know they have the disease.

Signs of Pertussis: Symptoms usually develop within 5-10 days after you are exposed. Sometimes pertussis symptoms do not develop for as long as 3 weeks.

Early symptoms:

- Cough
- Runny nose
- Sore throat
- Usually little or no fever

Later symptoms:

- Worsened cough
- Series of coughs without a chance to breathe between coughs.
- A gasp or “whoop” and/or gagging or vomiting at the end of the coughing fit.

Signs in Babies: Babies who get whooping cough are at a higher risk of hospitalization and even death.

- Many babies with pertussis do not cough at all.
- They can have a shortness of breath, which could lead to no breathing at all.
- If they stop breathing, they can turn blue.

Sounds of Pertussis: The sound of pertussis is a cough that sounds like a “whoop” that makes it hard to breathe. Children and adults can cough violently and rapidly, over and over, while trying to catch their breath between severe coughing; this is what makes the whooping sound.



THE NAVAJO NATION

RUSSELL BEGAYE PRESIDENT
JONATHAN NEZ VICE PRESIDENT

Prevention of Pertussis:

If you are showing symptoms of pertussis, please go see a doctor, stay home, and do not attend any large gatherings of people. This includes graduation ceremonies, graduation parties, school, work, family gatherings, etc.

Additionally:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Take care of your babies and elders to make sure they are not exposed.
- Stay home when you are sick. Do not attend public gatherings.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Practice other good health habits. Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces at home, work or school, especially when someone is ill. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.

The best protection against whooping cough is the whooping cough vaccine. Antibiotic medication may shorten the amount of time someone is contagious. If you or a family member are experiencing any of the symptoms, please see a doctor for appropriate action, testing, or treatment.

Contact:

Navajo Department of Health
(928) 871-6350