

## Whooping Cough Is Near: Cover Your Cough

Neighboring counties surrounding Howard County have found confirmed cases of pertussis, also known as Whooping Cough. If you have a persistent cough, there are important things you need to know and be doing to prevent the spread of the infection. Pertussis is a highly contagious respiratory tract infection caused by bacteria. It causes severe coughing that can interfere with eating, drinking, and breathing. It is spread through the air after an infected person coughs or sneezes. Other people can breathe in the infected droplets. If you have a persistent cough lasting for 2-3 days, please contact your healthcare provider to be evaluated. Adults often have a persistent cough or “tickle” thus creating more of a need to clear your throat. They may be the carriers and unaware that they are spreading the disease.

Symptoms of pertussis are as follows:

- Starts as a cold with symptoms of runny nose and an irritating cough
- Within 1-2 weeks, cough develops into coughing fits
- Fits are violent coughs when the victim struggles for breath
- A high-pitched whooping sound may follow the coughing
- Cough more frequent at night and may be followed by vomiting
- Between spells, person may appear to be normal

**If you have a persistent cough, PLEASE avoid community activities if possible.**

Affected individuals and their close contacts may be treated with an appropriate antibiotic that may help if given early in the illness. **If you have symptoms and are placed on antibiotics, Iowa Department of Public Health guidelines instructs you to avoid social activities for five (5) days and stay home.**

Pertussis is prevented through routine immunization. Persons should be maintaining cough hygiene that includes covering your cough, staying away from others when coughing, and washing your hands frequently. This disease is particularly dangerous for infants who have not received the full vaccination series. Pertussis can be fatal for those unvaccinated; they do not have the needed immunity to the disease.

If you have any questions regarding this illness, please contact your healthcare provider or Community Health Services in Cresco at 563-547-2989.