



Marion County

OREGON

For immediate release: September 3, 2008

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Editors Note: There is a local Salem family who had a personal challenge with pertussis recently. Dad got sick, as did some of the adolescent family members. They are willing to speak to the media about their challenge. If interested, call Kelly Martin at the number above to arrange an interview.

Pertussis (Whooping Cough) Cases on the Rise in Marion County; Infants at Greatest Risk—Free Immunization Clinic Offered

This summer, approximately half of the reported pertussis (whooping cough) cases in the State of Oregon have occurred in Marion County.

Whooping cough is a very contagious respiratory disease that is spread through the air when someone coughs or sneezes or by other close contact. It can start as a mild cold, but can quickly progress into severe coughing fits that can last for minutes at a time, leaving its victim gasping for air. Some infants can cough so hard that they turn blue, or vomit, or even stop breathing for a period of time.

In the last two months there have been five reported cases of infants with pertussis in Marion County. Most of the infants have been hospitalized. Although no one has died from pertussis in Marion County, four infants in Oregon have died in the past four years.

Almost half of the infant cases investigated revealed the likely source of the infant's infection to be an older child (11 years old or older) or adult in the household.

Whooping cough can be a hard illness for older children and adults as well. The coughing fits can disturb sleep and cause vomiting, broken ribs, a feeling of suffocation, and other complications. Pertussis can be so severe that adolescents miss significant amounts of school or become unable to participate in sports or other social activities. Parents may have to miss work in order to take care of their sick adolescent, and they may also become infected. Hospitalizations related to complicated pertussis are necessary in up to 2 percent of adolescents and 5 percent of adults.

To raise awareness and increase immunity, Marion County Health Department will offer a free Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis) vaccination clinic at the

Jackman Long Building at the Oregon State Fairgrounds on Wednesday, September 10, 2008, between 4:30 p.m. and 7 p.m. Vaccines will be given on a first come, first serve basis while supplies last.

According to health officials, the more adolescents and adults who get the Tdap vaccine, the greater protection there is for the infants in Marion County. Infants are not fully protected yet. That is why older people need to get vaccinated. Tdap is strongly recommended for adolescents, health care workers and anyone in close contact or living with an infant less than a year of age. Those between ages 10-64 years of age can receive Tdap

Parents often wonder why a booster dose for pertussis is recommended for their adolescent. Protection from some childhood vaccines can wear off. The protection from childhood vaccination against pertussis is not life long. The booster will help adolescents continue to be protected. A key to reducing further spread of whooping cough in our county is getting older children and adults vaccinated.

Those who would like a free vaccine are asked to bring their vaccination record. If you have had a tetanus vaccine in the last two years or if you are pregnant, you cannot receive the vaccine at this time. For more information, call (503) 588-5342.

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