WHOOPING COUGH FAQ

With the recent increase in Whooping Cough (Pertussis) cases in Holmes County, The Holmes County General Health District would like to put out an educational piece to answer frequently asked questions about the disease. Always feel free to call Holmes General Health District at (330)674-5035 with any questions. Our hours are 8-4:30 Monday thru Friday.

1. **What is Pertussis?** Pertussis, commonly known as whooping cough, is a highly contagious respiratory disease caused by the Bordetella pertussis bacteria.

2. **How is Pertussis spread?** Pertussis is spread by direct contact with droplets/discharge from an infected individual’s nose and throat. In other words, Pertussis is spread from person to person by coughing, sneezing or sharing close space. Adults can carry the bacteria in their throat and nasal passages, bring the disease home and infect children and infants in the household.

3. **What are the symptoms of Pertussis?** Symptoms usually appear 7-10 days after exposure but have a range of 4-21 days. Some people have milder symptoms especially if they have been vaccinated. A person is contagious for up to 21 days upon the first sign or symptom of Pertussis unless treated with antibiotics. A person is no longer contagious after completing the 5 day course of antibiotics. Symptoms appear in 3 stages:
   - **Stage1-** can last 1-2 weeks and includes, runny nose, sneezing, low grade fever and a mild cough.
   - **Stage2-** usually lasts 1-6 weeks, but can persist for up to 10 weeks and includes a burst of rapid coughs followed by a high pitched whoop, thick clear mucous with cough, a long inhaling effort or inability to breathe in between coughing, skin color may appear blue with coughing spells and children will often vomit afterwards.
   - **Stage3-** usually lasts 2-3 weeks, consisting of a persistent cough similar to that of a person infected with an upper respiratory illness.

4. **What are the complications of Pertussis?** Younger children and Infants are at greater risk of complications from Pertussis, they include pneumonia, middle ear infection, loss of appetite, sleep disturbance, fainting, dehydration, seizures, encephalopathy, short periods of not being able to breathe and death.

5. **What is the treatment for Pertussis?** Treatment is a five day course of antibiotics. The recommended antibiotics are Erythromycin, Azithromycin, Clarithromycin and Trimethoprim-Sulfamethoxazole.

6. **How is Pertussis diagnosed?** If you suspect you or anyone in your family has whooping cough, go to your family physician/emergency department where they will perform a simple nose/throat swab and send it to the laboratory for testing. The results are usually back within 2-3 days.

7. **How can Pertussis be prevented?** Pertussis is preventable by receiving vaccinations. The recommended schedule is 1 dose of DTAP at 2,4,6 months of age, with booster doses at 15-18 months, 4-6yrs of age, a Tdap at11-12 years of age. Your child can be put on a catch up schedule if they have never received a vaccination for Pertussis. Adults should receive a dose of Tdap or a booster dose if they are in close proximity with infants or small children, at high risk of exposure, work in the health care industry. Pregnant women should receive a Tdap with each pregnancy at 27-36 weeks so that the immunities can be passed onto the baby. Attached is the Holmes General Health District 2020 outreach immunization clinic schedule.