



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

**Peoria City/County  
Health Department**

# Media Alert

**Date:** December 3, 2012

**To:** All Media

**From:** Peoria City/County Health Department  
2116 N. Sheridan Road  
Peoria, Illinois 61604

**Contact:** Diana Scott

**Phone:** 309/679-6603

***For Immediate Release***

---

## ***Pertussis (Whooping Cough) in Peoria County***

The Peoria City/County Health Department is alerting the public that diagnosed cases of pertussis (also known as "Whooping Cough") are increasing in Peoria County.

Pertussis is a very contagious respiratory bacterial infection and can cause serious complications in high risk groups, especially infants less than one year of age and children who have not been fully immunized against the disease. Pertussis is easily spread from person-to-person; therefore, health officials are strongly encouraging parents, pregnant women, other family members, caregivers, and all who come in contact with young infants to be vaccinated against pertussis.

Greg Chance, Administrator at Peoria City/County Health Department states, "A sustained increase in pertussis has been observed in Illinois, primarily in our northern counties in the last few years. We are now seeing an increase in the cases that are being tested and diagnosed in Peoria County. Pertussis is one of the most commonly occurring vaccine-preventable diseases. While we are encouraging individuals to get vaccinated against the seasonal flu, this is a prime opportunity to remind the public to get vaccinated against pertussis, as well. Vaccination is still the safest and best method of protecting our high risk vulnerable populations, particularly infants, against disease."

Pertussis is spread to others through direct contact with bacteria from nasal and throat discharges from coughing and sneezing. Symptoms usually occur five to 10 days after exposure, but can take as long as 21 days. The first symptoms are similar to those of a common cold - a runny nose, sneezing, low-grade fever and a mild, occasional cough. The cough gradually becomes severe and, after one to two weeks, the patient has spasmodic bursts of numerous, rapid coughs. Unlike the common cold, pertussis can become a series of coughing fits that continues for weeks. During coughing attacks, the patient may turn blue, vomit and become exhausted. The name "whooping cough" is the characteristic high-pitched "whoop," which is more common in children, and comes from breathing in air after a coughing episode.

The Peoria City/County Health Department closely monitors all infectious diseases in Peoria County. For more information on pertussis or other public health issues, visit the website at [www.pcchd.org](http://www.pcchd.org).

###