

MEDICAL HEALTH OFFICERS **ALERT** FOR PHYSICIANS

August 6, 2015

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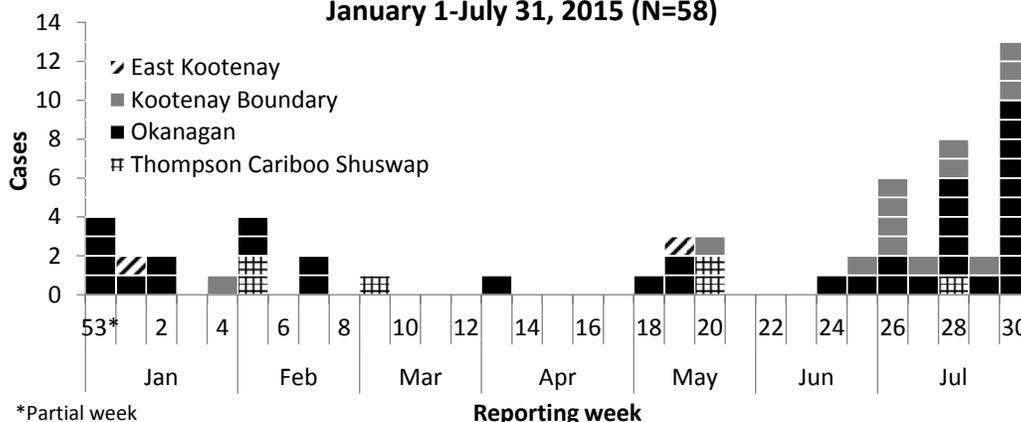
Pertussis on the rise

Epidemiology

Pertussis is on the rise in the Interior region of BC. A total of 58 cases were reported between January 1 and July 31. More than half of these cases have been reported since mid-June. Although sporadic cases have occurred throughout the region, the largest numbers of cases, including several clusters, have been reported in the Central Okanagan (n=30) and Castlegar (n=8) Local Health Areas. The year-to-date (YTD) incidence rates in the Central Okanagan and Castlegar are 16 per 100,000 and 58 per 100,000, respectively. The overall YTD incidence rate in IH is 8 per 100,000. Increased pertussis incidence is also occurring in other parts of the province. In 2014, increased incidence of pertussis occurred in Nelson and North Thompson. In 2013, a pertussis outbreak was declared in Trail.

In 2015, pertussis cases have been reported across all age groups (range: <1 to 73 years) with mean and median ages of 19 and 12 years, respectively. Three cases were under one year of age. Over half of cases were unimmunized or had unknown immunization status.

Confirmed pertussis cases in the Interior Health region, January 1-July 31, 2015 (N=58)



Incubation period: 9-10 days

Infectious period:

- Begins with a catarrhal stage (lasting 1-2 weeks) followed by paroxysmal cough
- Ends three weeks after paroxysmal cough onset
- Cases no longer considered infectious after five days of antibiotic treatment

Consider exclusion of symptomatic cases and contacts from daycare, school or workplace until five days of treatment has occurred or three weeks after onset of paroxysmal cough.

High risk contacts:

- Infants less than one year of age
- Women in 3rd trimester pregnancy
- Household/close group contacts (e.g., family, daycare) if there is an infant or 3rd trimester pregnancy in the group

Testing:

Ideally, patients with suspected pertussis should be tested using a nasopharyngeal swab for pertussis culture and PCR testing prior to starting treatment. However, collection of the nasopharyngeal specimen for testing should not delay start of the treatment. Instructions for use of the appropriate swab and collection of nasopharyngeal specimen is provided at:

<http://www.bccdc.ca/NR/rdonlyres/57572BC1-F1DA-498D-A2A6-5919C76D0B57/0/PertussispecimencollectionJune2013.pdf>

Physicians can order specialized pertussis swabs directly to their offices from the BC Centre for Disease Control:

http://www.bccdc.ca/NR/rdonlyres/75F8C6D8-C5EA-4A1D-99AD-FD5E6A52C120/0/BCPHMRLOrderFormUpdatedJune2015_WEB.pdf. Physicians in the Central Okanagan region can also phone 250-862-4300 ext. 7506 and arrange to pick up the swabs directly from the Kelowna General Hospital (KGH) Lab.

Treatment and chemoprophylaxis:

Dosages and duration are identical for treatment and chemoprophylaxis. See the BCCDC Communicable Disease Control Manual for specific dosage guidelines: <http://www.bccdc.ca/dis-cond/comm-manual/CDManualChap1.htm>.

Antibiotic treatment administered in the catarrhal phase can decrease duration of illness and severity of symptoms. Chemoprophylaxis is recommended for high risk contacts and is most effective given within three weeks of the first exposure.

Actions requested of all clinicians:

1. Be alert for cases of pertussis. Consider pertussis in any patient with paroxysmal or prolonged cough.
2. Test patients with suspected pertussis using a nasopharyngeal swab for pertussis culture and PCR.
3. Report suspect, probable, and confirmed cases to the CD Unit @ 1-866-778-7736.
4. Offer chemoprophylaxis to the high-risk contacts outlined above.
5. Encourage your patients to update their immunizations.

At present, there is no change to the routine provincial pertussis immunization recommendations and eligibility groups. Interior Health will continue to monitor the situation and assess if expanded control measures may be needed.

Suggested resources:

BC Centre for Disease Control. **Pertussis**. Accessible from: www.bccdc.ca/dis-cond/comm-manual/CDManualChap1.htm.
Immunize BC. **BC Routine Immunization Schedule**. Accessible from: www.immunizebc.ca.