Whooping cough on the increase

Interior Health is seeing an increase in pertussis cases, also known as whooping cough, and would like to remind parents about the importance of making sure their children’s immunizations are up to date. Pertussis activity is being seen across the region with the majority of cases currently in the Central Okanagan.

“Infants under one year of age are most at risk for serious complications from pertussis,” said Dr. Kamran Golmohammadi, Medical Health Officer with Interior Health. “Pertussis starts with similar symptoms to a common cold (runny nose, sore throat, and mild fever) and then progresses to a cough. The cough can become severe, with or without a classic whooping sound and may be accompanied by gasping, gagging, shortness of breathing and vomiting. In serious cases it can lead to pneumonia, seizures, brain damage or even death.”

Immunization is the best way to prevent the spread of this disease. The pertussis vaccine is part of the routine childhood vaccinations that are given at 2 months, 4 months, 6 months, and 18 months old, and again at age 4 to 6 years (before Kindergarten). A pertussis vaccine is also given to teens at 14 to 16 years of age (Grade 9) in British Columbia.

“We are strongly advising all parents to ensure their children are immunized so they are not at risk,” adds Dr. Golmohammadi. “The pertussis vaccine is very safe and effective in preventing the spread of this disease.”

Parents are advised to check their child’s immunization record and make sure they are up to date. Information about accessing immunization records can be found at ImmunizeBC.

To discuss pertussis immunization for children or to book an appointment contact your local public health centre. Adults who have not been immunized for pertussis can contact their local pharmacy to inquire about getting the vaccine.

For more information on whooping cough and immunization:
- Call your local public health centre. To find a health centre near you, use our online search tool http://www.interiorhealth.ca/FindUs/_layouts/FindUs/By.aspx?type=Location. Health centres are also listed under Health Authorities in the blue pages of your telephone directory.

Interior Health is committed to promoting healthy lifestyles and providing a wide range of quality health-care services to more than 742,000 people living across B.C.’s vast interior. For more information, visit www.interiorhealth.ca, follow us on Twitter @Interior_Health, or like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/InteriorHealth.