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# Media Release



## **Whooping Cough Outbreak Continues – Health Unit Offering Immunization Clinics**

**January 21, 2020 - For immediate release**

The Timiskaming Health Unit (THU) is currently investigating three new cases of whooping cough (pertussis) in the Englehart area with exposure at Englehart Public School. Public Health Nurses are contacting parents and guardians of students who have the highest risk of exposure. To date, there are 16 cases of confirmed or probable whooping cough in the Temiskaming Shores area, four cases of confirmed or probable in Kirkland Lake and five cases of confirmed or probable in Englehart.

As a result of the increase in confirmed and probable cases, THU will be hosting immunization clinics at its three office locations for those who wish to receive vaccination, especially those who are due or overdue. Adults and older adults can be reservoirs of transmission and as their protective levels decrease over time it is important that they receive one booster in adulthood. People are encouraged to contact their health unit office to make an appointment.

The THU would like to recognize the continued efforts made by health care providers across the district in identifying, managing, and treating cases. Health care providers have also been a valued system partner in their promotion of vaccination. While whooping cough vaccination rates are high across the district, immunity to pertussis from vaccination or a natural infection can wane 4 to 20 years later. Immunity uptake from pertussis vaccination is effective approximately 80% of the time.

Whooping cough is distinctive from the common cold, bronchitis or the croup, in the severity and the duration of the cough. While whooping cough starts like a common cold, with sneezing, runny nose, low fever, and a mild occasional cough, the cough will get worse over two weeks. After two weeks, coughing spells develop and the cough may end in a whooping sound. The cough may be so severe that the person can gag or throw up. Sometimes a thick, clear mucous can be spit out. The coughing spells can last for weeks or months. Older children and adults may have prolonged cough without the “whoop” or vomiting. “Whooping cough germs spread easily from person to person. Babies under the age of one are at the most risk for severe infection. Immunization provides the best protection against whooping cough,” said Dr. Glenn Corneil, Timiskaming’s Acting Medical Officer of Health.

Important to know about whooping cough vaccination and exposure:

- The whooping cough (pertussis) vaccine is part of routine immunization for infants, children, and teenagers. The vaccine is given at two, four, six, and 18 months of age. A booster dose is needed between four and six years of age and again at 14-16 years of age. Immunity decreases over time, therefore one booster dose of vaccine is recommended for adults.
- Check with your health care provider or the THU to ensure you and your family are up to date with vaccination. Those who receive immunizations at THU or who report

immunizations to THU through licensed childcare or school may review their immunization record online here: <http://timiskaminghu.com/281/Immunization>

- Pregnant or immunocompromised individuals should follow-up with their health care provider to confirm their history of vaccination. A booster of the pertussis vaccine is recommended for all pregnant women in their third trimester.
- Hand washing is the single most effective way to prevent the spread of infections. In addition, using a tissue and coughing and sneezing into your arm, not your hand is also effective in reducing spread of infection.
- If you develop symptoms of whooping cough in the next 21 days, follow-up with your health care provider and notify the Timiskaming Health Unit.

For further information or if you have any comments or concerns, please call the Timiskaming Health Unit at 705-647-4305 or toll free at 1-866-747-4305.

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For more information

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