



11 April 2014

Dear staff, parents and students:

Whooping Cough (Pertussis) Outbreak Facts

Over the past two months there have been an increased number of confirmed Whooping Cough (Pertussis) cases in Southern Alberta. This year there have been 34 confirmed cases. It is expected that there is more Pertussis circulating in the community, as many people with the disease may not seek medical attention.

Whooping cough (Pertussis)

- A highly contagious, bacterial infection of the lungs and airways.
- Pertussis can be a severe – even fatal – illness, particularly in children. In 2012, an infant in Southern Alberta died from Pertussis.
- Children under one year of age are most likely to have serious illness as a result of Pertussis.

Signs and symptoms

- Pertussis illness starts with a runny nose, sneezing, fever and mild cough. Typically, over about a week, the cough will become more severe with repetitive coughing spells.
- In younger children, these coughing spells are usually followed by a “whooping” sound when inhaling. Vomiting following a coughing spell is also common.
- Older children and adults may experience milder symptoms, such as a prolonged cough with or without fits or whooping sound.
- The cough may last for two months or longer.

Why is the disease serious?

- Complications can include pneumonia, seizures, brain injury and death.
- Children under one year of age are most likely to require hospitalization.
- People with Pertussis are most contagious in the first three weeks after symptoms begin.

How you can protect your child?

- 1) Immunization is the best method to protect your child and limit the spread of disease to others. Parents should ensure their children are vaccinated according to Alberta's Routine Childhood Immunization schedule: www.health.alberta.ca/health-info/imm-routine-schedule.html.
- 2) During the current outbreak in Southern Alberta, pregnant women in the third trimester (26 weeks) may receive Pertussis containing vaccine to protect herself and the child in the first weeks after birth.
- 3) It is recommended that immediate family members and caregivers who live in the same household as infants under 6 months are up to date with their Pertussis immunization.



4) Encourage your child to not share water bottles, lipstick, lip balm, drinks.

If you wish to immunize your children against Pertussis, or need to check immunization status, please call your local Public Health office to make an appointment (see the attached list of offices in southern Alberta).

Treatment

- A lab test will only be positive in the first three weeks after the start of symptoms.
- Antibiotics are effective in minimizing spreading Pertussis to others if given early after you start getting sick, although antibiotics may not change the course of Pertussis disease. Antibiotics will decrease the amount of time that you or your child must stay home.
- Anyone diagnosed with Pertussis must:
 - Stay at home from school, work, church, public places and other social settings for five days after the start of antibiotics.
 - Stay home 21 days after the start of your symptoms if antibiotics are not taken.

Contacts of confirmed cases with Pertussis

- Antibiotics are only recommended after contact with a confirmed case for individuals who live in a household with an infant under one year of age, and pregnant women in third trimester.
- It is, in general, NOT advised for contacts of confirmed cases (other than susceptible individuals as described above) to take antibiotics because:
 - Unless given immediately after exposure, antibiotics may not prevent disease development.
 - With a large amount of disease in the community, children and adults will be continually exposed to the Pertussis bacteria.
 - Prolonged courses of antibiotics may result in side effects, as well as antibiotic resistance.

Contact your health care provider immediately if you suspect that you or your child has Pertussis.

For health advice and information, call Health Link Alberta, 24-hours a day, 1-866-408-5465 (LINK).

Sincerely,

Vivien Suttorp, MD, MPH, CCFP, FCFP
Lead Medical Officer of Health
Alberta Health Services – South Zone



PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICES IN SOUTHERN ALBERTA

COMMUNITY	ADDRESS	PHONE	HOURS OF OPERATION
Bow Island (Provincial Bldg.)	802 – 6 Street E. Bow Island, AB T0K 0G0	403-545-2296	Monday – Friday 8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Brooks	440 Third Street E Brooks, AB T1R 0X8	403-501-3300	Monday – Friday 8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Cardston (Provincial Bldg.)	576 Main Street Cardston, AB T0K 0K0	403-653-5230	Monday – Friday 8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Coaldale (Hospital)	2100 - 11 Street Coaldale, AB T1M 1M8	403-345-3000	Monday – Friday 8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Crowsnest Pass	12501 – 20 Avenue Blairmore, AB T0K 0E0	403-562-5030	Monday – Friday 8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Fort Macleod (Hospital)	744 – 26 Street Fort Macleod, AB T0L 0Z0	403-553-5351	Monday – Friday 8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Lethbridge (Train Station)	810 – 1 st Avenue South Lethbridge, AB T1J 4L5	403-388-6666	Monday – Friday 8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Magrath	37E – 2 Avenue Magrath, AB T0K 1J0	403-758-4422	Monday – Friday 8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Medicine Hat	2948 Dunmore Road SE Medicine Hat, AB T1A 8E3	403-502-8200	Monday – Friday 8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Milk River (Hospital)	517 Centre Avenue Milk River, AB T0K 1M0	403-647-3430	Monday – Friday 8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Oyen	315 3 Avenue E Oyen, AB T0J 2J0	403-664-3651	Monday – Friday 8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Picture Butte (Piyami Health Centre)	301A Rogers Avenue Picture Butte, AB T0K 1V0	403-388-6751	Monday – Friday 8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Pincher Creek (Hospital)	1222 Bev McLachlin Drive Pincher Creek, AB T0K 1W0	403-627-1230	Monday – Friday 8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Raymond	200 West 200 North Raymond, AB T0K 2S0	403-752-5430	Monday – Friday 8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Taber	5009 – 56 Street Taber, AB T1G 1M8	403-223-7230	Monday – Friday 8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Vauxhall	406 – 1 st Avenue N. Vauxhall, AB T0K 2K0	403-223-7229	Monday – Friday 8:00 am – 4:30 pm