



Northwestern
Health Unit

www.nwhu.on.ca

21 Wolsley Street
Kenora, ON P9N 3W7

December 19, 2011

Dear Parents and Caregivers:

Re: Pertussis Cases

The Northwestern Health Unit has noticed a slight increase in the number of pertussis (whooping cough) cases in our catchment area. The cases include young infants and adults alike. Adults are increasingly recognized as being a source of transmission to infants who are not yet fully protected through immunization. Infants and children are at a greater risk for complications of pertussis.

Pertussis is a respiratory infection caused by bacteria. Pertussis is also known as 'whooping cough' because the major symptom is severe spells of coughing followed by a 'whoop' sound before the next breath. The illness lasts many weeks. The disease can affect individuals of any age; however, severity is greatest among young infants. Infants with pertussis may become so sick that they are hospitalized and may even die.

The populations most at risk for pertussis infections and complications are unimmunized or incompletely immunized individuals, particularly infants under one year of age who have not yet received or have not completed their pertussis immunization series (at 2, 4, 6 and 18 months of age). Evidence suggests that adult close contacts are a significant source of infection transmission to infants who are not yet fully protected. The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care funds a once-in-lifetime dose of the pertussis vaccine for all adults aged 19 to 64. The Northwestern Health Unit encourages adults who have frequent contact with babies to get this vaccine.

Please contact the Northwestern Health Unit if you would like to inquire about your immunization status and the status of your child(ren). The Northwestern Health Unit holds regular clinics to immunize people of all ages.

Sincerely,

Donna Stanley
Program Manager of Infectious Diseases

cc. Dr. Jim Arthurs, Medical Officer of Health