

## **Pertussis Alert: Infant Death Following Contact with Symptomatic Adult Family Members**

This week, a one-month old Preston County infant died from whooping cough following exposure to adult family members infected with *Bordetella pertussis*. These family members had been coughing for several weeks and had sought medical care.

Pertussis, or whooping cough, is a highly communicable, vaccine-preventable acute infectious disease. Several points are critical though in the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of pertussis:

1. Educate medical professionals to: a) consider pertussis as a differential when individuals, *including adults*, present with a cough; b) wear appropriate personal protective equipment when treating patients with coughs; and c) perform appropriate testing (i.e. nasopharyngeal swabs and culture) on these individuals to confirm disease. A physician education sheet may be found at: [http://www.wvdhhr.org/IDEP/pertussis\\_providers.htm](http://www.wvdhhr.org/IDEP/pertussis_providers.htm)
2. Initiate complete contact tracing immediately and provide appropriate prophylaxis for any identified contacts of confirmed cases.
3. Reinforce appropriate vaccination protocols and reiterate to individuals, that even though they may have been vaccinated against pertussis previously, they may experience waning or incomplete immunity.

Persons infected with pertussis may present with cold or flu-like symptoms, such as runny nose, sneezing, fever and a mild cough. These clinical symptoms can last up to two weeks and are followed by increasingly severe coughing spells. Fever, if present, is usually mild. Those exhibiting a cough illness lasting greater than or equal to 2 weeks with one of the following: paroxysms of coughing, inspiratory "whoop," or post-tussive vomiting, without other apparent cause should be asked to submit a specimen for laboratory analysis for *Bordetella pertussis*. Laboratory criteria for diagnosis of pertussis are essential: isolation of *Bordetella pertussis* from a clinical specimen OR positive PCR for *B. pertussis*. All suspected cases of pertussis should have a nasopharyngeal aspirate or swab obtained for culture from the posterior nasopharynx. Testing is available free of charge through the Office of Laboratory Services (304-558-3530).