



News Release



Shelby County Health Department
814 Jefferson Ave., Memphis, TN 38105

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FOR RELEASE: IMMEDIATE **CONTACT:** Risk Communications Coordinator
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Pertussis Outbreak NOT a Current Concern for Shelby County

MEMPHIS, TN – Pertussis, also known as Whooping Cough, is a common disease in the United States and outbreaks of the disease occur frequently in different parts of the country. Currently, Washington is experiencing an outbreak of pertussis; and California experienced an outbreak in 2010, reporting 9,143 cases of pertussis, the highest number of cases reported since 1947. Shelby County, however, is NOT currently experiencing an unusual number of pertussis cases. In 2011, there were 3 confirmed cases of pertussis reported. Thus far in **2012**, there have been **8 confirmed pertussis cases** here in Shelby County. Although the number has increased over last year's totals, it does not yet imply there is a reason for concern. Pertussis cases fluctuate frequently from year to year. In 2010, the total number of confirmed cases was 29, while in 2009 and 2008 they were 13 and 12 respectively.

Pertussis is an acute infectious disease caused by bacteria and can be very serious for young children and infants. The first stage of pertussis is characterized by symptoms such as runny nose, sneezing, low grade fever, and a mild occasional cough, similar to a common cold. As the cough gradually becomes severe, after one to two weeks, the second stage begins. Pertussis diagnoses usually occur during the second stage, characterized with bursts of rapid coughs followed by a high-pitched whoop. These episodes are commonly followed by vomiting and exhaustion. Early diagnosis and treatment with antibiotics can lessen the severity of the disease.

People with pertussis usually spread the disease by coughing or sneezing while in close contact with others, who then breathe in the pertussis bacteria. Many infants who get pertussis are infected by parents, older siblings, or other caregivers who might not even know they have the disease.

Vaccines are the best way to prevent pertussis among all age groups. There is high pertussis vaccine coverage for children nationwide; however, protection from the childhood vaccine decreases over time. Preteens, teens and adults need to be revaccinated, even if they were completely vaccinated as children. Please read more about the recommend pertussis vaccines at <http://www.cdc.gov/Features/Pertussis/>.

“While vaccines are very effective, they are not 100% effective,” said Dr. Helen Morrow, Chief Health Officer for the Shelby County Health Department. **“We know the vaccine protection decreases over time. That is why a booster dose is recommended beginning at 10 years of age. The booster dose is also recommended for adults. Infants who are too young to have completed the initial series of shots are especially vulnerable to the disease. By immunizing older children and adults, we can provide a safe environment for the infants.”**

For more information on receiving the Pertussis vaccine at a discounted rate, contact the Shelby County Health Department's Immunization Clinic at (901) 222-9331 during normal business hours, Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m.