



Churchill County Board of Health Public Service Announcement

Run Date: April 14, 2017 – April 28, 2017
Subject: Whooping Cough reported in Carson City, Douglas, and Lyon Counties
For: Churchill County Residents
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Churchill County Community Health Nurse Office Advisory

Five confirmed cases of pertussis (Whooping Cough) have been confirmed in Carson City, Douglas and Lyon Counties. These cases have occurred in partially-immunized children from the ages of 3 months to four years of age. While there have been no confirmed cases in Churchill County, your Community Health Nurse is asking that persons with symptoms of pertussis be examined by their healthcare provider. For questions relating to pertussis symptoms or to obtain immunizations, please call your Community Health Nurse office at (775) 423-4434.

Pertussis Clinical Features:

- Incubation period 7 – 10 days (range 4 – 21 days)
- Insidious onset, similar to the common cold with nonspecific cough
- Fever usually minimal throughout course of illness
- Catarrhal stage – 1-2 weeks
- Paroxysmal cough stage – 1-2 weeks
- Convalescence – weeks – months

The incubation period of pertussis is commonly 7 – 10 days, with a range of 4-21 days, and rarely may be as long as 42 days. The clinical course of the illness is divided into three stages.

The first stage, the catarrhal stage, is characterized by the insidious onset of coryza (runny nose), sneezing, low-grade fever, and a mild, occasional cough, similar to the common cold. The cough gradually becomes more severe, and after 1-2 weeks, the second, or paroxysmal stage, begins.

Fever is generally minimal throughout the course of the illness.

It is during the paroxysmal stage that the diagnosis of pertussis is usually suspected.

Characteristically, the patient has bursts, or paroxysms, of numerous, rapid coughs, apparently due to difficulty expelling thick mucus from the tracheobronchial tree. At the end of the paroxysm, a long inspiratory effort is usually accompanied by a characteristic high-pitched whoop. During such an attack, the patient may become cyanotic (turn blue). Children and young infants, especially, appear very ill and distressed. Vomiting and exhaustion commonly follow the episode. The person does not appear to be ill between attacks.

Paroxysmal attacks occur more frequently at night, with an average of 15 attacks per 24 hours.

During the first 1 or 2 weeks of this stage, the attacks increase in frequency, remain at the same level for 2 to 3 weeks, and then gradually decrease. The paroxysmal stage usually lasts 1 to 6 weeks but may persist for up to 10 weeks. Infants younger than 6 months of age may not have the strength to have a whoop, but they do have paroxysms of coughing.

In the convalescent stage, recovery is gradual. The cough becomes less paroxysmal and disappears in 2 to 3 weeks. However, paroxysms often recur with subsequent respiratory infections for many months after the onset of pertussis.