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NEWS

SEDGWICK COUNTY COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMUNITY INITIATIVES
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HEALTH DEPARTMENT REPORTS INCREASE IN PERTUSSIS

(Sedgwick County, Kan.) – The Sedgwick County Health Department has received 27 reported cases of pertussis, also known as whooping cough, to date in November. That’s already more than any single month in the last five years.

Pertussis is a highly contagious, vaccine-preventable, bacterial disease that resides in the mucus of the nose and throat of an infected person. When the person sneezes or coughs, droplets spray in the air. The infected mucus can enter other people’s noses or throats when they breathe, or when they put their fingers in their mouth or nose after touching an infected surface. After one or two weeks, pertussis causes violent and rapid coughing, sometimes resulting in a “whooping” sound when a lack of air in the lungs causes a person to inhale while coughing.

During the holiday season, families should be particularly aware of the potential to spread pertussis, as more people come together for extended periods of time, increasing the likelihood of exposure if a person is contagious. Babies are particularly at risk, as they cannot receive a pertussis vaccination, but are passed around at family gatherings.

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If you are experiencing symptoms of pertussis, contact your health care provider for an evaluation and to request testing for pertussis. Testing is not recommended for people who do not have symptoms. If a person is infected, those in the same household or in close contact with that person should see their health care provider to receive preventative antibiotics.

The best way to prevent pertussis is through vaccination, which can be obtained from the Sedgwick County Health Department, 316-660-7300. Additionally, transmission of illness can be reduced by good hand washing habits.

For more information and Health Department clinic hours, visit www.sedgwickcounty.org.

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