

South Dakota Health Department urges whooping cough immunization for adolescents, provides free vaccine

PIERRE, S.D. – Whooping cough cases are on the rise and state health officials are urging parents to make sure young children get immunized and adolescents get a booster dose. Several states are reporting large outbreaks of whooping cough, also known as pertussis. In South Dakota, cases are up 29% over the five-year median, with 22 cases reported through July.

“This is a serious illness that causes uncontrollable coughing, rib fractures, pneumonia, loss of consciousness and even death,” said Colleen Winter, Director of Health and Medical Services, Department of Health. “It’s especially serious for very young children, with two-thirds of those under age 1 who get it needing hospitalization.”

The department provides free whooping cough vaccine for children, with doses recommended at 2 months, 4 months, 6 months, 15-18 months, and 4-6 years. Children need the complete series to be fully protected. A booster dose is also recommended at 11-12 years as immunity begins to wane but just one in five South Dakota adolescents has received that booster. The department provides that booster dose free as well.

Winter said vaccinating middle school students protects them from illness and increases the ring of protection around vulnerable infants. Because whooping cough is highly contagious and spreads easily in the school setting, immunizing the older age group also helps decrease the likelihood of outbreaks.

Parents can contact their usual vaccine provider to request the vaccine. Once school is underway, some schools will also be scheduling clinics to offer the whooping cough vaccine along with the seasonal flu vaccine. As such clinics are scheduled they will be posted at <http://doh.sd.gov/WhoopingCough/>.

Increasing child immunization rates is a key objective of the department’s Health 2020 Initiative.

**The vaccine that will be provided is Tdap, which also includes tetanus and diphtheria. The vaccine is free but some providers may charge an administration fee. For more info contact Dianna Monahan – VA Black Hills.*