

Mission:
To protect, promote & improve the health
of all people in Florida through integrated
state, county & community efforts.



Rick Scott
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John H. Armstrong, MD, FACS
State Surgeon General & Secretary

Vision: To be the Healthiest State in the Nation

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Contact: Kerry S. Waldron
Phone: (386) 362-2708

Department of Health in Suwannee County confirms two cases of Pertussis (Whooping Cough)
~Pertussis can infect persons of all ages, yet is most serious in infants and young children~

SUWANNEE COUNTY – The Florida Department of Health in Suwannee County (DOH-Suwannee) has confirmed two cases of pertussis, or whooping cough, in two unvaccinated children, ages 3 months old and 4 years old. Health officials are encouraging residents to ensure they have been vaccinated against the disease.

“Pertussis is a very serious, yet preventable disease,” said DOH-Suwannee Administrator Kerry Waldron. “Babies and young children often catch the disease from family members so we urge the community to seek vaccination right away to decrease the risk of infection. Some people cannot be immunized for medical reasons or because they are too young. It is especially important for these individuals that the people around them are fully immunized.”

Pertussis is very contagious and spreads easily person to person. The bacteria (germs) that cause pertussis live in the nose, mouth and throat. People get pertussis by breathing in the droplets and germs sprayed into the air by an infected person during coughing, sneezing or talking. It is also spread by contact with a tissue or sharing a cup used by a person infected with pertussis.

Pertussis begins as a mild upper respiratory infection. The first symptoms are like those of a cold, including sneezing, runny nose, low-grade fever and a mild cough. Within two weeks, the cough becomes much worse, and can last up to six weeks or more.

Children and older adults with pertussis often have episodes of uncontrolled coughing followed by a noticeable intake of breath that sounds like a “whoop.” These “whooping” coughing spells can make it hard for a child or older adult to eat, drink or even breathe. Pertussis can be difficult to diagnose in infants who present with nonspecific symptoms, typically without a cough. To listen to the sound of a pertussis cough, visit www.soundsofpertussis.com.

Pertussis is preventable. The best method of prevention is for all children to complete their primary diphtheria/tetanus/pertussis (DTaP) immunization series by 2 years of age. All children should receive an additional dose of DTaP prior to kindergarten entry and a tetanus/diphtheria/pertussis (Tdap) booster prior to entering seventh grade.

Adults ages 18 through 64 should receive one dose of Tdap vaccine. Pregnant women should receive Tdap with every pregnancy. A tetanus-diphtheria (Td) booster should be received every 10 years after that. Any adolescent or adult caring for infants should receive a Tdap regardless of when they received their last Td.

Despite the availability of an effective vaccine for infants and booster shots for adolescents and adults, pertussis continues to cause serious illness and death. Pertussis cases have been increasing since the 1980s as the number of infants and children who have never been immunized increases.

To learn more about pertussis (whooping cough) visit <http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/vaccine-preventable-disease/pertussis/index.html>

To learn more about immunizations and vaccine safety visit <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/>.

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