

## Infants and Pertussis

### Recorded Information Line Option 5

Due to the recent confirmed cases of pertussis reported in Broome County, it is important to make sure your child is up-to-date on their immunizations by scheduling an appointment as soon as they are due for the next immunization. For added safety at this time, the Health Department recommends that infants under the age of one who have not been completely immunized against pertussis be kept away from people with a cough when possible.

Infants under one year old, especially those under six months, or those infants who are not completely immunized are most likely to have severe symptoms if they develop pertussis. Pertussis is a highly contagious disease that is spread through the air by cough. Pertussis begins with cold symptoms and a cough, which becomes much worse over 1-2 weeks. Symptoms usually include a long series of coughs (“coughing fits”) followed by a whooping noise. However, older children, adults and very young infants may not develop the whoop. There is generally only a slight fever. People with pertussis may have a series of coughs followed by vomiting, turning blue, or difficulty catching breath. The cough is often worse at night and cough medicines usually do not help alleviate the cough.

Infants less than 6 months old often do not have the typical whoop or coughing fits. If your child comes down with cold symptoms that include a cough, contact your child’s doctor without delay. Tell the doctor that pertussis has been diagnosed in other people in Broome County. Your child’s doctor may want to perform a test to determine if your infant has pertussis.

The single most effective control measure to prevent the spread of pertussis is maintaining the highest possible level of immunization in the community. The vaccine for pertussis is usually given in combination with diphtheria and tetanus. Immunization authorities recommend that DTaP (diphtheria, tetanus, acellular pertussis) vaccine be given at two, four, six and 15-18 months of age and between four and six years of age.

The following good health practices will help reduce the spread of all communicable diseases in our community:

- Don’t share water bottles or eating utensils
- Cover mouth and nose with tissue when coughing or sneezing
- Practice good hand washing

For more information on pertussis go to the Broome County Health Department’s website at [www.gobroomecounty.com/safety](http://www.gobroomecounty.com/safety) and follow the links to Pertussis.

If you still have questions, contact the Broome County Health Department, Monday through Friday, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., at 778-2839.