



## Kingman County Health Department

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### **Third pertussis case confirmed in Kingman County**

The number of confirmed cases of pertussis (whooping cough) in Kingman County this year has risen to three.

The most recent case was diagnosed on June 3. The patient is an unvaccinated 91-year-old county resident. The second case was confirmed on May 21 and involved an 11-year-old county resident who had not received the 11/12 year old pertussis booster vaccine. The second case was unrelated to the first case, which involved a teenager and was confirmed March 27.

Although Kingman County has now had a total of three pertussis cases this year, it is important for the public to know that this does not constitute an outbreak because none of the cases were at the same time and none of them can be traced to each other, said Cindy Chrisman-Smith, county health officer and director of the Kingman County Health Department.

The health department is working with healthcare providers to contact those at highest risk of developing pertussis, updating vaccinations and making referrals for antibiotic treatment to prevent the most vulnerable from infection. In addition to the three confirmed cases, there have been two probable cases to date this year in the county. Approximately 280 pertussis cases have been reported in Kansas so far in 2015.

Pertussis is a critical public health concern. The disease is highly contagious and spread through the air, typically by coughing and sneezing. Those in close contact with pertussis patients also can get sick. Close contact is defined as being within three feet of the sick person for an hour or more. The disease can be contagious for from four to 21 days after contact with an infected person.

The illness usually starts with mild, cold-like symptoms (mild cough, sneezing, runny nose and fever). As the disease progresses over one to two weeks, hard, rapid coughing spells literally leaving patients gasping for air. These relentless coughing fits can lead to complications such as broken ribs, collapsed lungs, pneumonia, encephalitis (brain swelling), seizures and even death.

Those at greatest risk to become seriously ill include pregnant women (especially those in the last trimester), infants under the age of 12 months, people with long-term health problems, and those who have problems fighting infection. Even if fully vaccinated, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) recommends these people complete a course of antibiotic therapy to prevent illness. People who live with those at high risk should also consider consulting their doctor for antibiotics.

Vaccination is the best disease prevention. Pertussis vaccination is usually done at 2 months, 4 months, 6 months, and at 15-18 months with other routine infant vaccinations. Booster shots are given at 4-6 years and at 11-12 years. Adults who have not been vaccinated should also have at least one vaccine, which is included with the tetanus immunization.

The Kingman County Health Department has a limited supply of vaccine on hand. In addition to keeping vaccinations current, health officials also strongly recommend anyone with a worsening cough, especially one lasting for two weeks or more, contact their healthcare provider for pertussis testing and tell the person making the appointment that you may have pertussis. Healthcare providers want to reduce the risk of spreading the disease by limiting contact with other patients. Pertussis is confirmed by a nasal swab and DNA testing.

The Kingman County Health Department is available to answer questions about the disease, the vaccine and related concerns. Please call the department at 620-532-2221.

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