

To: All Area Newspapers

From: Wendy Kramer, Health Officer

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For Immediate Release

Re: St. Croix County Sees Increase in Pertussis (Whooping Cough) Disease

St. Croix County has received forty (40) laboratory confirmed cases of pertussis since May 27th, compared to zero (0) cases in 2011. The cases are in people 2 months to 55 years of age.

Bordetella pertussis (Whooping Cough) is a very contagious bacterial disease spread by an infected coughing person. It can infect anyone, but it is extremely serious in babies, young children, and pregnant women. Pertussis disease may result in hospitalization.

The disease begins much like a cold with a runny nose, sneezing, and a mild but irritating cough for 1-2 weeks. Whooping cough is most contagious before the coughing starts. After 1 to 2 weeks, severe coughing can begin. The illness progresses to spells of explosive coughing that can interrupt breathing, eating and sleeping and it is commonly followed by vomiting and exhaustion.

Pertussis is diagnosed from a laboratory confirmed nasal (nose) specimen collected during the early stage of the illness.

Anyone who is tested for pertussis should be treated (antibiotic prescribed) at the same visit and **instructed to stay isolated at home** (STAY HOME!) until they receive a negative test results or complete five days of antibiotic treatment. Anyone that has been identified as a close contact to a pertussis case and has cold-like symptoms should see their doctor, get tested, treated, and stay isolated. In addition, antibiotic treatment is recommended for well people who are close contacts (people who have spent a lot of time around the infected person) to the person diagnosed with pertussis. Treatment may make the infection less severe if it is started early, before coughing begins. Treatment can also help prevent spreading the disease to close contacts and is necessary for stopping the spread of pertussis. There are antibiotics that will shorten the period of the spread of the disease, but an individual may cough up to three months.

The best way to prevent pertussis (whooping cough) among infants, children, teens, and adults is to get vaccinated. Also, keep infants and other people at high risk for pertussis complications away from infected people.