

May 15, 2023

## Public Health Alert – Growing number of Pertussis cases in Alberta and Manitoba

### Situation

Since January 2023 there has been an increase in confirmed pertussis (whooping cough) cases being reported in Alberta and more recently, in Manitoba. **There is an increased risk of pertussis cases in northwestern Ontario** due to our proximity to Manitoba, and frequent travel between the provinces.

Pertussis is a bacterial infection causing severe and prolonged coughing. It can affect people of any age; however, infants one year and younger are at greater risk of serious complications including pneumonia, encephalopathy, seizures, and death.

Pertussis vaccine can reduce severity and spread of the disease, but pertussis remains an endemic disease with cyclic surges. Vaccination is important but does not rule out infection. Infection may require antibiotic treatment, which also shortens the infectious period.

### Actions

- Ask patients about their travel history to Alberta or Manitoba and known contact with pertussis during travel or at home.
- Notify Northwestern Health Unit when you suspect or confirm any [Disease of Public Health Significance](#).
- Follow current testing guidance [Test Information Index | Public Health Ontario](#)
- Counsel those with pertussis to stay home until well, practice respiratory etiquette, and avoid contact with young children, infants, and women in their third trimester of pregnancy until 5 days of antibiotic treatment is completed, or 21 days after symptom onset if untreated.
- Promote routine vaccination with a pertussis containing vaccine. This includes:
  - Infants and children at 2, 4, 6, 18 months of age and those 4-6 years of age
  - Pregnant women, in every pregnancy regardless of previous doses
  - Teenagers 14 – 16 years of age (10 years after their 4-6 year booster)
  - Adults 18 and older who have not had a Tdap booster in adulthood

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