

Health **FAX**

Pertussis Vaccination a Priority as Cases Increase in Simcoe-Muskoka

Attention: Physicians, Emergency Departments, Walk-in Clinics/Urgent Care Clinics, Infection Control Practitioners

Date: July 12, 2012

There continues to be an outbreak of pertussis that originated in an under-immunized community in southwestern Ontario. The provincial outbreak declared in January 2012 has now expanded beyond the original under-immunized community to affecting the general population in that region.

Since January 1, 2012, there has been 9 lab confirmed cases of Pertussis in Simcoe Muskoka area with ages ranging between 22 days and 46 years. Between January 1, 2012 and April 30, 2012, there were 170 lab confirmed cases of Pertussis in Ontario. In previous years, Ontario reported 29 lab confirmed cases in total for each of 2011 and 2010.

Although Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit does not seem to be affected by the provincial outbreak, we are experiencing an increase of pertussis cases in Simcoe-Muskoka. This increase is consistent with periodic pertussis epidemics that seem to occur every 4 to 6 years. In the last 3 months, we have had 3 infant cases under the age of 5 months. This underlines the importance of immunizing not only infants, but children and adults to prevent transmission to infants who have not completed their primary immunization series. In 2010, California experienced 9143 cases and 10 infant deaths.

Given recent pertussis activity, vaccinating adolescents and adults with pertussis vaccine is a priority. Since 2003, adolescents 14 to 16 years of age have been offered one booster dose of the Tdap vaccine in Ontario; however, uptake is low (about 62% in 2008-2009 for this age group). While the addition of the Tdap vaccine has decreased pertussis incidence, *adults who did not receive an adolescent dose of Tdap or who received the previous whole cell pertussis vaccine remain the most common source of infection of pertussis for infants*. High coverage rates of Tdap is essential as Tdap vaccine offers 85 per cent protection against pertussis when given as a booster dose in adolescence.

Adolescents 14 to 16 years are eligible to and should receive the Tdap vaccine. Also, since August 2011, all adults 19 to 64 years of age who have never received the Tdap vaccine are eligible to and should receive one lifetime (publicly funded) dose of the vaccine. This lifetime dose will replace one of the Td booster doses given as part of the regular schedule every ten years. Parents, grandparents or other adult household contacts of newborns, infants and young children are considered a priority to receive the Tdap vaccine.

With heightened awareness of the provincial outbreak and an increase in number of Pertussis cases in our area, physicians can request pertussis test kits from the Provincial Public Health Lab at <http://www.oahpp.ca/resources/laboratory-materials.html>. *Bordetella Pertussis* is confirmed by testing of nasopharyngeal swab using Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test. Serological testing is not recommended in the diagnosis of Pertussis.

For more information on Pertussis please visit www.simcoemuskokahelath.org or to report suspects or confirmed cases of Pertussis please contact the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit Communicable Disease Team at 705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520 extension 8809.