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Pertussis Activity Reminder of Need for Booster Shot

Muskegon, MI – Each year, Public Health – Muskegon County investigates cases of Pertussis (whooping cough) reported by local physicians. Up-to-date vaccination would have prevented a majority of the cases. Monitoring disease activity and vaccination coverage levels are just two of the many ways that the public health department is always working for a safer and healthier Muskegon County.

Pertussis is a very contagious respiratory (lung) disease. In the beginning, pertussis feels like a cold, causing sneezing, runny nose, fever and a mild cough. However, after 1 or 2 weeks, severe coughing develops. A child with pertussis coughs violently, over and over until there is no air left in the lungs. This forces the child to inhale with a loud “whooping” sound that gives the disease its nickname, whooping cough. Pertussis is most severe and potentially deadly in infants less than 1 year old.

Older children and adults can get pertussis too, but it is usually not as serious. In adolescent and adults, pertussis causes severe coughing spells without the “whoop” noise, vomiting and disturbed sleep, which can last several weeks to months. Many infants who get pertussis catch it from their older brothers and sisters, or from their parents — who might not even know they have the disease.

Pertussis is a bacterial infection and can be diagnosed by a physician, confirmed with a laboratory test and treated with antibiotics. Fortunately, it is also vaccine preventable. Children younger than 7 years old receive a series of shots to protect them against pertussis. However, immunity fades over time. Periodic booster doses of a vaccine called Tdap keeps immunity strong.

Available since 2005, Tdap is a combination vaccine that includes protection against tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis. Adolescents 11 through 18 years of age should get one booster dose of Tdap. Adults 19 through 64 years of age should substitute Tdap for one booster dose of the tetanus, diphtheria vaccine (Td). It is especially important for anyone who has close contact with infants younger than 12 months of age and anyone works in a healthcare setting with direct patient contact to get a dose of Tdap.

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Editorial Note:

Reported Cases of Pertussis in Muskegon County By Calendar Year												
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008*	Total
Cases	5	0	0	4	0	4	18	7	7	2	6	52

*Data through September 30, 2008.