



# Jefferson County PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

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## Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Jefferson County Pertussis (Whooping Cough) Outbreak

**Watertown, NY – October 10, 2019** ~ Since June 1<sup>st</sup> Jefferson County has had 23 confirmed cases of Pertussis (Whooping Cough). The age range of confirmed cases has been 5 months old to 15 years old. Older children, adults, vaccinated individuals and those who have had whooping cough in the past may experience a milder illness, but can still spread the disease to others, some of whom may be too young to be fully vaccinated. An infected person can spread the disease starting when symptoms begin to three weeks after the onset of coughing. Coughing frequently lasts for several weeks.

Whooping cough is transmitted by coughing or sneezing, or coming in direct contact with respiratory secretions of infected persons. The most common symptom is uncontrollable coughing spells often followed by a characteristic "whoop" sound.

"Whooping cough is a highly communicable disease. Infants and young children are at greatest risk for severe, even deadly, complications," said Ginger Hall, Director of Jefferson County Public Health Service (JCPHS). "Pertussis is a vaccine-preventable disease and we are urging everyone to make sure they are up to date on their immunizations. Vaccination is the best defense against whooping cough."

Check with your provider to see that you and your family are up to date with immunizations against Pertussis (Whooping Cough) as follows:

- For children to be fully immunized against whooping cough, they need five doses of the vaccine (at ages 2, 4 and 6 months, between 15 and 18 months, and between 4 and 6 years).
- Expectant mothers should get one dose of Tdap between 27 through 36 weeks of **each** pregnancy, **preferably during the earlier part of this time period**. By getting Tdap during pregnancy, a pregnant woman passes her pertussis antibodies to the newborn. These antibodies provide protection against pertussis in early life, before the baby starts getting DTaP vaccines at 2 months old. Tdap will also help protect the mother, making her less likely to spread pertussis to her baby.
- Adults who didn't get Tdap vaccine (Tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis) as a teen should get a single dose of Tdap. Adults get Tdap in place of one of their regular tetanus boosters — the Tetanus shot that CDC recommends for adults every 10 years.

JCPHS staff are working with medical providers, schools and families to mitigate the spread of the disease. For more information, go to [www.jcphs.org](http://www.jcphs.org) and click on Pertussis Information.

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