

Dear Superintendent,

Re: Pertussis outbreak in Fraser Health

Fraser Health is currently responding to a pertussis (whooping cough) outbreak. It began in the Eastern Fraser Valley region last fall, but has now spread to most communities within the Fraser Health Authority. Over 160 cases have been reported, but the true number of cases is likely much higher than that. As a result, we are now advising Fraser residents in contact with young children to get a free pertussis booster from their physician or immunizing pharmacist. This is to protect the very young children who are the most vulnerable to the disease.

Pertussis is a nasty bacterial infection. Early symptoms are like those of a cold (sneezing, runny nose, a low fever and a mild cough). Within a few days to a week, the severe cough develops; long bouts of uncontrollable coughing that may end with a whoop or crowing sound when the person breathes in. The coughing may be so severe that it makes a person gag or vomit. It may last up to a month or two, and typically happens more at night. Pertussis can be life threatening in children less than 1 year of age; 50% of young infants will be hospitalized and 1-2% will die. Adults and teens may not present with the typical whoop and the diagnosis may be missed. Pertussis infection is treatable with antibiotics; they will reduce the length of the infectious period, and may reduce the severity of the cough if given early enough.

Fraser Health is advising the following:

- Please review your children’s immunization records to ensure that they are up-to-date. Pertussis vaccines are offered to children in British Columbia at 2, 4, 6 and 18 months of age, at 4-6 years of age and in grade 9.
- If you are an adult or youth in contact with young children, and you have not had a pertussis booster in the last 5 years, please get the free vaccine from your physician or immunizing pharmacist. This recommendation includes teachers in contact with young children.
- If you/your child develop symptoms of pertussis, please see your family physician for assessment.
- If a child in your school is diagnosed with pertussis, please ask the parents to report the infection to their local health unit.

For more information, including a map of pharmacies where pertussis vaccine is available, go to <http://www.fraserhealth.ca>, or call toll-free 1-855-587-3889.

Drs. Nadine Loewen, Larry Gustafson, Dr. Véronic Clair	North	604-476-7024
Drs. Paul Van Buynder, Mark Bigham, Elizabeth Brodtkin, Victoria Lee, Helena Swinkels	South	604-587-7896
Dr. Gillian Arsenault	East	604-556-5069

The Fraser Health Medical Health Officers are available for medical consultations and can be reached at 604-587-3828 or 1-877-342-6467 (in Fraser East). To page the MHO on-call after hours: 604-527-4806.

Abbotsford HU Tel: 604-864-3400	Agassiz HU Tel: 604-793-7160	Burnaby HU Tel: 604-918-7605	Chilliwack HU Tel: 604-702-4900	Cloverdale HU, Surrey Tel: 604-575-5100	Guildford HU, Surrey Tel: 604-587-4750
Hope HU Tel: 604-860-7630	Langley HU Tel: 604-539-2900	Maple Ridge HU Tel: 604-476-7000	Mission HU Tel: 604-814-5500	New Westminster HU Tel: 604-777-6740	Newport HU, Port Moody Tel: 604-949-7200
Newton HU, Surrey Tel: 604-592-2000	North Delta HU Tel: 604-507-5400	North Surrey HU Tel: 604-587-7900	Port Coquitlam HU Tel: 604-777-8700	South Delta HU Tel: 604-952-3550	White Rock HU Tel: 604-542-4000