Whooping Cough on Rise in Kansas
(KMZA)-- Kansas has seen an increase of pertussis cases, also known as whooping cough, this year.

As of Sept. 4th, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment says 216 confirmed cases of pertussis have been reported so far this year in 21 Kansas counties. Only 52 confirmed cases were reported in all of last year.

Locally, Nemaha County has had 17 of the confirmed cases of pertussis this year, with the most recent cases occurring in August.

Whooping cough is a highly contagious bacterial respiratory illness spread by coughing and sneezing. It affects people of all ages but is most serious for infants, especially those too young to be vaccinated or who are not fully protected. It causes cold-like symptoms followed by a long, severe cough that can last for weeks. Adolescents and adults often have a milder disease, but can still spread it.

Nemaha County Community Health Services Administrator Jane Sunderland says

vaccination is an effective way to prevent the spread of pertussis. Pertussis vaccines are recommended for all children and adults.

The pertussis vaccine is given in combination with diphtheria and tetanus vaccines, called DTaP, and is recommended for children age 2 months through 6 years old. A pertussis vaccine for adolescents and adults, called Tdap, is recommended as a one-time booster.

Sunderland encourages everyone to check with their health care provider on their vaccination status and to get vaccinated if they are not currently vaccinated against pertussis.

She says it's especially important for anyone who has close contact with babies younger than 12 months to get a dose of Tdap to help protect the baby from whooping cough. Through the Infant Caregiver Project, NCCHS has an additional supply of Tdap vaccine available for any adult 19 years or older who cares for or has close contact with infants or children less than 6 years of age.

For more information or to schedule an appointment, call Nemaha County Community Health Services in Sabetha at 785-284-2152.

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