

Pertussis Status Update From the Health Department:

The Flathead City-County Health Department is continuing to see increased pertussis (whooping cough) activity. As of November 28, 2018, the Health Department has received 32 cases of pertussis this year.

The Health Department would like to remind community members to be aware of pertussis illness symptoms and take measures to stop transmission of the disease. If you have had a cough lasting more than one week, consult your healthcare provider.

Persons with pertussis should not go to daycare, school, work or public gatherings for at least five days after starting an antibiotic. All household and close contacts including classmates should be treated with medication at the same time as the ill persons to prevent the disease from spreading. Individuals who have been exposed and are exhibiting symptoms of pertussis should stay home from school or work until they can seek medical advice and be tested for pertussis.

Pertussis (whooping cough) is a highly contagious respiratory disease that is spread through the air when an infected person sneezes or coughs. The disease usually starts with cold-like symptoms with runny nose or congestion, sneezing, and maybe mild cough or fever. After 1 to 2 weeks and as the illness progresses, severe coughing begins. Pertussis can cause violent and rapid coughing, over and over, until the air is gone from the lungs. When there is no more air in the lungs, the person is forced to inhale with a loud “whooping” sound. This extreme coughing can cause the person to throw up, turn blue, and have difficulty catching their breath. Anyone can get pertussis, but it can be very dangerous for babies and people with weakened immune systems.