

## **Pertussis (Whooping Cough)**

### **Parents urged to be on the alert for pertussis**

Pertussis, or whooping cough, is a highly contagious respiratory infection caused by the bacteria *Bordetella pertussis*. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, pertussis is one of the most common vaccine preventable diseases in the United States. In Fairfield County, as of July 31, 2010, there were a total of 76 reported pertussis cases in 2010. In 2009, there were a total of 19 confirmed cases. In 2008, there were 6 confirmed pertussis cases. In 2007, there were 20 confirmed cases.

Everyone, and especially parents, should be aware of the symptoms of Pertussis. Pertussis begins as a mild upper respiratory infection. Initially symptoms resemble those of a common cold, including sneezing, runny nose, low grade fever and a mild cough. Within two weeks, the cough becomes more severe and is characterized by episodes of numerous rapid coughs followed by a crowing or high-pitched whoop. According to the Ohio Department of Health Infectious Disease Control Manual, young infants, and adults do not always have these typical coughing spells. Older people or partially immunized children may have milder symptoms.

Pertussis is primarily spread by direct contact with the discharges from the nose and throat of infected individuals. Young children and infants are at the greatest risk for serious and potentially life-threatening complications from Pertussis.

For more information about pertussis, check with your health care provider or visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website, [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) for complete information about pertussis.