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**County Council advises families
to immunize children against pertussis**
Public vaccination clinics set for Aug. 25 and 30

Responding to an increase in pertussis (whooping cough) cases in the suburban Philadelphia region, the Delaware County Department of Intercommunity Health Coordination reminds parents to immunize their children against this highly contagious and preventable disease.

Pertussis, more commonly known as whooping cough, is a disease involving the lungs and airways that is spread through the air when an infected person sneezes or coughs. On Aug. 5, the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DoH) issued a health advisory regarding a rise in pertussis cases in the five-county region.

The single best way to prevent and control pertussis is through vaccination in children. Pertussis vaccine is given to children under age seven. Children should receive four doses of diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis vaccine (Dtap) by 18 months and an additional dose before they start school.

However, people are also reminded that immunity from their initial pertussis vaccine wanes after five to 10 years and it is recommended that adolescents and adults get a combination tetanus, diphtheria and acellular Pertussis vaccine (Tdap) for booster immunization.

“The best practice is to check with your family physician and determine if you are fully immunized against pertussis,” said County Councilman Mario J. Civera Jr., Council’s liaison to the County’s Department of Intercommunity Health Coordination. People should ask their physician if they are up to date with the recommended vaccines which are Dtap for infants/children and Tdap for adolescents/adults.

Public vaccination clinics for pertussis

The Pennsylvania Department of Health, Delaware County Center, is offering two public vaccination clinics for pertussis immunization in Delaware County:

- 9-11 a.m. Wednesday, Aug. 25 at the Delaware County State Health Center, 151 W. Fifth Street, Chester
- 3-7 p.m. Monday, Aug. 30, at Penn State, Brandywine campus, Commons/Athletic Building, Route 352, Middletown.

Councilman Civera said the Department of Intercommunity Health is presenting information on pertussis through the County Website at www.co.delaware.pa.us and with a video airing on the Website and DelcoTV, Comcast Channel 190.

(More)

(Pertussis awareness continued)

Information is also being distributed through the Delaware County Immunization Task Force, the Delaware County Library System, the County's Child Care Information Services and the DoH Delaware County State Health Center.

"We want to make sure that families know about pertussis and that they get the necessary immunizations, especially for their children," Councilman Civera said. "Those most at risk of complications are infants and also adults with compromised immune systems. This is a preventable illness. Prevention is our best weapon against this disease."

According to the DoH Health Advisory, there has been a four-fold increase in cases in the Philadelphia region as compared to the first three months of the year. Generally, more than 200 cases are reported each year in Pennsylvania, mostly in children.

Pertussis is most severe for babies. About 1 in 20 infants with pertussis get pneumonia.

Pertussis usually starts with cold-like symptoms and is suspected after a persistent cough sets in.

The most common way to diagnose pertussis is through a nasal swab. The main symptom is a chronic cough, which can be rapid coughing followed by a high-pitched whoop as the person takes a breath.

Starting in the school term of 2011-2012, all children entering the seventh grade are to receive one dose of Tdap if five years have elapsed since their last tetanus immunization.

"We are working with the Immunization Coalition, the state Department of Health and our public health partners to raise awareness about pertussis," Councilman Civera said. "As we enter the new school year, we want all of our children to get a healthy start."

For more information about pertussis visit www.co.delaware.pa.us. Or visit www.vaccinesforlife.com. For information about immunization recommendations visit www.cdc.gov/vaccines.