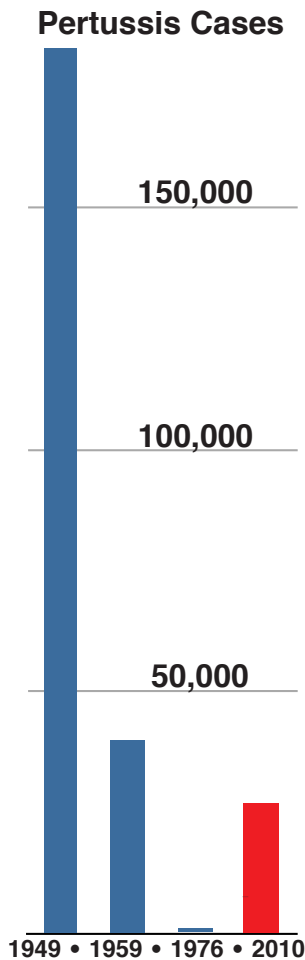


OUTBREAK OF WHOOPING COUGH IN NEW YORK STATE!



Whooping cough, or *Pertussis*, is a contagious and dangerous infection caused by the bacteria *Bordetella pertussis*. Although infants and young children are routinely vaccinated against this infection, *pertussis* is on the rise in the United States and protecting yourself and your family is important.

Pertussis causes infection and inflammation in the lungs, leading to violent coughing fits. The “whoop” of whooping cough is actually a gasp for air after a long fit of coughs. The cough can persist for many weeks, maybe as long as 10 weeks! An old nickname for this infection is the “100 day cough”.

It is important to prevent *pertussis* because it can be deadly, especially for the very young. Half of infants infected with *pertussis* will need to be hospitalized, and infants under 3 months of age have the highest death rate from the disease.

Pertussis is on the rise in the United States. Cases remain well below the 183,000 reported per year prior to the 1940's. That was when *pertussis* vaccine was first used. 27,000 cases were reported in the US in 2010. This was the highest number since 1959 when 40,000 cases were reported. The reports of 2011 seemed a little better, but so far 2012 is looking worse, with 46 states reporting higher numbers than last year at this time. New York state has reported 1,500 cases as of July, a rate triple from last year at the same time. We have seen a number of cases already in Rockland County!

How do we prevent *pertussis*? Vaccinate! Infants routinely receive five doses of the *DTaP* vaccine at 2, 4, 6, 15 months and at 4 years of age. The “aP” in *DTaP* stands for the newer synthetic *acellular pertussis* vaccine. It has decreased vaccine reactions by over 90% and is extremely safe. But immunity appears to wane after 5-10 years of vaccination. We now recommend a booster vaccine called “*Tdap*” starting at age 10. New York State requires *Tdap* for all children in order to enter 6th grade.

Are you aware that *Tdap* is now recommended for all adults? *Tdap* can prevent adults from spreading this dangerous infection to babies and young children. We recommend everyone consider getting *Tdap* from their doctor, especially pregnant women, parents and grandparents of young children.

What is causing the current *pertussis* epidemic? Is it due to more families refusing vaccines despite their proven safety? Is it because the safer “*acellular pertussis* vaccine” wears off more quickly? We are not sure, but feel that if we all update our *pertussis* vaccines, we can end the outbreak!

If your child's doctor suspects your child may have *pertussis*, a nasopharyngeal swab may be sent to test (a very thin swab of the back of your child's nostril). Antibiotics will be prescribed if *pertussis* is suspected, and the whole household may need to be treated.

If you or your child is experiencing violent coughing fits (sometimes to the point of vomiting) with or without a “whoop”, call and make an appointment. If your child is not up to date on *pertussis* vaccine, call us. Please call your own doctor and ask for “*Tdap*” for yourselves!

