

Mission:  
To protect, promote & improve the health  
of all people in Florida through integrated  
state, county & community efforts.



Rick Scott  
Governor

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Vision: To be the Healthiest State in the Nation

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Pertussis Cases in Infants Announced by Florida Department of Health in Okaloosa County**

**OKALOOSA COUNTY** – The Florida Department of Health in Okaloosa County (FDOH-Okaloosa) has received reports of two confirmed cases and one probable case of pertussis in unvaccinated infants. Only one infant was too young to have started the childhood immunization series. All three infants are recovering and families have received treatment.

None of the cases are associated with each other; therefore this is not an outbreak. “While this is not an outbreak of pertussis,” says Dr. Karen Chapman, Director of the FDOH-Okaloosa, “this does indicate that pertussis is present in our community and is being contracted by unimmunized infants.” Dr. Chapman says, “Immunizing individual children helps protect the health of the community, especially those people who cannot be immunized. This includes children who are too young to have completed their immunizations, those who cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons, and those who cannot make an adequate response to vaccination.”

These are the first reported cases of infant pertussis in Okaloosa County since 2007. Pertussis is commonly known as “whooping cough.” Whooping cough is highly contagious and can be fatal for infants. The reported incidence of pertussis in the United States has increased almost 17 times since 1979. Most infants are exposed to pertussis through a family member. Whooping cough presents as a mild illness in children, adolescents and adults compared to its presentation in infants. If one member of the household has it, there is an 80% chance that susceptible household members will catch it.

The most important way to prevent pertussis is for all children to complete their childhood immunization series by age 2 years. In addition all children prior to 7<sup>th</sup> grade school entry must get a pertussis booster. All adults should replace one of their every ten year tetanus booster (Td) with a tetanus/pertussis booster shot (Tdap). Any adult expecting an infant in their life soon should receive a Tdap prior to delivery and any adult caring for infants should receive a Tdap to protect infants from pertussis.

To learn more about whooping cough or pertussis visit [www.soundsofpertussis.com](http://www.soundsofpertussis.com).  
To learn more about immunizations and vaccine safety visit [www.cdc.gov/vaccines/](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/).

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