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## **WALTON COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDS PERTUSSIS PROTECTION**

**Walton County** – The Walton County Health Department urges Floridians and visitors to learn more about pertussis. Despite the availability of an effective vaccine, pertussis (commonly called whooping cough) continues to cause serious illness and death. Pertussis cases have been increasing since the 1980s, and some major outbreaks have occurred. Pertussis can result in serious complications, including middle ear infections, pneumonia, convulsions (seizures), disorders of the brain, and brief episodes of apnea (paused or stopped breathing). Pertussis causes about nine (9) deaths per year in the United States.

A case of pertussis in children and adults begins with a cough and runny nose that can last one to two weeks, followed by weeks-to-months of rapid coughing fits that sometimes end with a whooping sound. Pertussis is contagious before severe coughing starts.

Pertussis is extremely dangerous for infants and young children. Adults infected with pertussis may not know it, since their symptoms are typically mild. This means you could unknowingly infect a susceptible child or unvaccinated infant with the disease. Family members are most often the transmission source of pertussis to infants. Anyone can get pertussis, but children, especially unvaccinated or incompletely vaccinated infants under age one year are at most risk. The Tdap booster protects you and protects young children.

The best way to prevent pertussis is through immunizations. Recommendations on preventing pertussis include the following: Children 6 years of age and younger are routinely vaccinated against tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis. Ask your doctor if your children have received all the pertussis shots needed for his or her age. Because vaccine protection for pertussis, tetanus and diphtheria can fade with time, pre-teens going to the doctor for their regular check-up at age 11 or 12 years should get a booster vaccine, called Tdap. Teen and young adults, who did not get a booster as a pre-teen, should get one dose when they visit their health care provider. All adults should get a booster dose of tetanus, diphtheria (Td) every 10 years. Adults under 65 who expect to have close contact with an infant younger than 12 months of age (including women who may become pregnant) should get a dose of Tdap instead of the simple Td, adding protection from pertussis. If you are age 65 years or older and anticipate being around infants, get a Tdap regardless of the timing of your last Td booster.

Contact your health care provider or the Walton County Health Department at (850) 892-8015 ext. 1129 for more information. Additional information about immunizations and pertussis can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/Features/Pertussis/> and <http://www.immunizeFlorida.com/>.

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