



Community Medicine Newsletter

Pertussis Outbreak Update for Vancouver Physicians

Adacel (Tdap) vaccine now publicly funded for physicians and office staff

Pertussis (whooping cough) outbreak in Fraser Health continues with sustained transmission noted outside the initial outbreak zone of Hope and Chilliwack. Approximately 140 cases have been reported with 52% occurring among children ≤ 15 years including 3 cases in infants. Four lab confirmed cases were reported in Vancouver Coastal Health region this week. This is higher than the monthly average of 1 – 3 cases and may indicate increasing activity. As clinical cases of pertussis are not reported, community activity is likely higher.

Please be alert for patients with symptoms of pertussis. Please report clinical cases to VCH Communicable Disease Control (604.675.3900) during the day so that public health follow up is not delayed.

Clinical Presentation: Suspect pertussis in a patient who has a paroxysmal cough of any duration, a cough with an inspiratory whoop, or cough ending in vomiting or gagging or associated with apnea. Pertussis should also be suspected in patients with prolonged cough with no other known cause.

Lab Diagnosis: In the last update, we had advised you to confirm diagnosis by collecting a **nasopharyngeal specimen** (not a throat swab) using a **Pertussis Collection Kit**. These kits can be ordered for free from the Provincial Lab by faxing (604.707.2606) the order form located below:

<http://www.phsa.ca/NR/rdonlyres/357FE8D0-2020-4A34-9416-8C3B12C4F2C3/0/SampleContainerOrderForm.pdf>

We understand that your orders may not have been filled due to a shortage of these collection kits. More kits are expected in the next two weeks so your orders should be filled shortly.

Immunization: We are pleased to inform you that **you may now order free pertussis vaccine (Adacel) for yourself and your office staff who have contact with young infants (under 18 months of age) and pregnant women. Free vaccine is also available for your Aboriginal patients who have not received a pertussis containing vaccine in the previous five years.** Please order vaccine from your local health unit.

Please ensure your patients' pertussis immunizations are up-to-date. Once only adult booster of acellular pertussis vaccine (Adacel or Boostrix) is recommended by the National Advisory Committee on Immunization, is available for purchase and is highly recommended for caregivers of infants and pregnant women. Since pertussis can be severe, even fatal, in infants, it is especially important that infants receive their 2, 4 and 6 month immunizations without delay.

WHO Growth Charts Now Available for Physicians from Local Health Unit

The BC College of Family Physicians, Society of General Practitioners of BC, BC Medical Association, Office of the Provincial Health Officer, and the Ministry of Health have endorsed the use of the WHO growth charts by all health professionals to ensure consistent practice for monitoring and assessing growth patterns in BC infants, children and adolescents.

A supply of these growth charts is currently available from your local public health unit. The charts can also be downloaded from www.dietitians.ca/growthcharts. Information and resources on how to use the growth charts are available at the following site: <http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/pho>.

For questions, please call the on-call immunization nurse at 604-983-6700.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian O'Connor". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a checkmark-like flourish at the end.

Brian A. O'Connor, MD, MHSc
Medical Health Officer
Vancouver Coastal Health, North Shore