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## Pertussis cases confirmed in west part of AHS South Zone

LETHBRIDGE – Eleven new cases of pertussis (whooping cough) have been confirmed in the past week in Lethbridge, the County of Lethbridge and Raymond, prompting Alberta Health Services (AHS) to remind residents to get immunized and take necessary precautions to limit the spread of the infection.

There have now been 38 confirmed cases of pertussis in 2019 in AHS South Zone. There were 58 confirmed cases in the South Zone last year.

Pertussis – a bacterial infection that causes severe coughing that may last for weeks – can affect all age groups; however, infants one year of age and younger are at greatest risk of serious complications, including pneumonia, convulsions, brain damage and even death.

Immunization is the best method to protect against and limit the spread of pertussis. All residents in South Zone are encouraged to ensure that they, and their children, are up-to-date on their immunizations.

People who are uncertain of their immunization history, or their child's, can contact their local community health centre or public health office to discuss and to book an appointment.

In Alberta, vaccine that protects against pertussis is offered to children, free of charge, through [Alberta's Routine Childhood Immunization schedule](#). Pregnant women in the third trimester (26 weeks) are also offered pertussis-containing vaccine. All adults 18 years of age and older are advised to receive one adult dose of pertussis-containing vaccine.

Regardless of age, everyone is reminded not to share water bottles, lipstick, lip balm or drinks.

Pertussis illness starts with a runny nose, sneezing, fever and mild cough. Typically, over about a week, the cough will become more severe with repetitive coughing spells. In younger children, these coughing spells are usually followed by a “whooping” sound when inhaling. Vomiting following a coughing spell is also common in young children.

Older children and adults may experience milder symptoms, such as a prolonged cough with or without fits or whooping sound. However, in anyone, the cough may last for two months or longer.

People who suspect they, or a family member, may be sick with pertussis should stay at home and call a family physician or Health Link at 811 before seeking medical care. Individuals with a confirmed case of pertussis should stay home from work, school or childcare until five days of antibiotics have been completed.

Additional information about pertussis and the importance of immunization is available online at <http://immunizealberta.ca/i-need-know-more/diseases-covered/pertussis-whooping-cough>.

Alberta Health Services is the provincial health authority responsible for planning and delivering health supports and services for more than four million adults and children living in Alberta. Its mission is to provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans.

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**For media inquiries, contact:**

Sherri Gallant, AHS Communications

587-220-1805

[Sherri.gallant@ahs.ca](mailto:Sherri.gallant@ahs.ca)