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For Immediate Release

Nunatsiavut Government’s DHSD encouraging vigilance of pertussis

With an increase in *Bordetella pertussis* throughout the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Nunatsiavut Government’s Department of Health and Social Development (DHSD) is urging residents of Nunatsiavut to help stop the spread.

Pertussis, commonly known as whooping cough, is a highly contagious respiratory illness caused by a type of bacteria called *Bordetella pertussis*. It is spread easily through droplets in the air from coughing or sneezing by infected people. Symptoms usually develop within 5 to 10 days after exposure, but sometimes do not develop for as long as three weeks. Whooping cough typically begins with cold-like symptoms and a cough that worsens over one to two weeks. Coughing may occur in fits followed by a “whooping” noise, vomiting, cyanosis (turning blue) or the inability to catch one’s breath. Coughing may be worse at night and can last one to six weeks.

“In June, on the advice of the Regional Medical Officer of Health, the Nunatsiavut DHSD rolled out an enhanced Tdap booster vaccine (tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis) to Grade 6, 7 and 8 students,” stated Gerald Asivak, Minister of Health and Social Development.

“This vaccine is typically administered in Grade 9 as part of the school health program. By offering it to students earlier, the goal is to prevent transmission and severe disease outcomes in remote communities like ours where access to tertiary care services is difficult.”

Pertussis can affect people of all ages, but the greatest risk is to infants one year of age or younger and pregnant people in their third trimester.

You can also protect yourselves and others by using a tissue or your arm to cover coughs and sneezes; clean your hands regularly with soap and water or hand sanitizer; and contain your illness by staying home when you are sick and wearing a mask as needed.

Individuals in Nunatsiavut who have questions about pertussis booster/Tdap vaccine availability, are encouraged to call their local public health office.

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