FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: TED KRAFCZYK, PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER
MONONGALIA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT
TELEPHONE: 304-319-3775   TED.L.KRAFCZYK@WV.GOV

PERTUSSIS (WHOOPING COUGH) UPDATE 2015
MORGANTOWN, WV – AUGUST 27, 2015

PERTUSSIS, also known as whooping cough, is a highly contagious respiratory disease. It is caused by the bacterium *Bordetella pertussis*.

PERTUSSIS is known for uncontrollable, violent coughing which often makes it hard to breathe. After fits of many coughs, someone with pertussis often needs to take deep breaths which result in a "whooping" sound. Pertussis most commonly affects infants and young children and can be fatal, especially in babies less than 1 year of age.

PERTUSSIS is a very contagious disease only found in humans and is spread from person to person. People with pertussis usually spread the disease by coughing or sneezing while in close contact with others, who then breathe in the pertussis bacteria. Many infants who get pertussis are infected by older siblings, parents or caregivers who might not even know they have the disease. Symptoms of pertussis usually develop within 5–10 days after being exposed, but sometimes not for as long as 3 weeks.

PERTUSSIS can be diagnosed if the patient has a history of typical signs and symptoms of pertussis, the current physical condition and laboratory testing of nasopharyngeal and blood specimens.

PERTUSSIS is generally treated with antibiotics and early treatment is very important. Treatment after three weeks of illness is unlikely to help because the bacteria are gone from your body, even though you usually will still have symptoms.

The best way to prevent pertussis among infants, children, teens, and adults is to get vaccinated. Also, keep infants and other people at high risk for pertussis complications away from infected people. In the United States, the recommended pertussis vaccine for infants and children is called DTAP. This is a combination vaccine that protects against three diseases: diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis. The childhood whooping cough vaccine (DTAP) protects most children for at least 5 years. Vaccine protection for these three diseases fades with time. There is a booster for preteens, teens and adults that contains protection against tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis (TdAP).

The easiest thing for adults to do is to get Tdap instead of their next regular tetanus booster—that Td shot that they were supposed to get every 10 years. The dose of Tdap can be given earlier than the 10-year mark, so it is a good idea for adults to talk to a healthcare provider about what is best for their specific situation.
While pertussis vaccines are the most effective tool we have to prevent this disease, no vaccine is 100% effective. If pertussis is circulating in the community, there is a chance that a fully vaccinated person, of any age, can catch this very contagious disease. If you have been vaccinated, the infection is usually less severe. If you or your child develops a cold that includes a severe cough or a cough that lasts for a long time, it may be pertussis. The best way to know is to contact your doctor.

Dr. Lee Smith, Monongalia County Health Department County Health Officer, said “Pertussis is a disease that has resurfaced worldwide. Adults do not maintain immunity to pertussis from their childhood vaccinations. People over age 19 should have a Tdap (Tetanus, Diphtheria, Acellular Pertussis) at least every 10 years but during outbreaks may be given more frequently. Public Health strives to strike a balance as we want to treat appropriately but do not want to treat unnecessarily as that results in resistance of bacteria against antibiotics. Start of school in the fall is a time when children and adults come together in great numbers and this is when we start to see many upper respiratory tract infections most are viral but some will be bacterial. Not everyone who coughs has pertussis. In order to be as precise as we can, the diagnosis requires the person to have been coughing x 2 weeks. Treatment is a course of antibiotics after which the person is considered to be non-infectious and may return to school or work. We recommend that everyone keep up to date on their vaccines and if any question has any questions consult with their physician or primary care provider”.

Monongalia County Health Department has vaccines available. For more information please contact 304-598-5100 or visit the website at www@monchd.org

###