

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Wednesday, November 15, 2000**

Contacts: Nancy Duncan R.N., Deputy Director  
Lisa Dunham, Governmental Communications

(636) 949-7407  
(636) 949-1892

## **Health Department Reports Pertussis Case In County Student** *Middle School Student Diagnosed with Whooping Cough*

*St. Charles County* — The St. Charles County Department of Community Health and the Environment, Division of Public Health, has received laboratory confirmation that a Francis Howell Middle School student has been diagnosed with Pertussis, commonly known as "whooping cough." School officials have notified parents of other students attending the school.

Pertussis is a highly contagious respiratory disease. It begins with mild upper respiratory symptoms including runny nose and mild cough. A severe chronic cough can develop producing episodes of coughing accompanied by a whooping sound. The cough spasm can be so severe that it can cause vomiting. Fever may or may not be present.

Sometimes Pertussis can be mistaken for bronchitis. Younger children may have more severe symptoms. Adults and older children may have the persistent cough but no whoop. Incubation time for this illness, the time from exposure to actual disease, is 7 to 20 days from the date of exposure.

While the St. Charles County Department of Community Health and the Environment and the Missouri Department of Health do not expect a widespread outbreak of Pertussis in the

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community, children should be kept up-to-date on their immunizations. Younger children tend to have more severe symptoms. Older children and adults may be more at risk of infection since immunity tends to wane with age and there is no vaccine for use after six years of age. For this reason it is very important to keep the children in a community vaccinated against this easily preventable illness.

Information about Pertussis can be found on the Department of Community Health and the Environment website, [www.scchealth.org](http://www.scchealth.org). Click on the Division of Public Health on the upper right or bottom of the page and then on the "vaccinations" item on the Division's home page.

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