

**COLUMBUS PUBLIC HEALTH AND FRANKLIN COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH – Press Release
FOR TUESDAY, September 7, 2010**

Community Outbreak of Pertussis Continues to Increase

Cases usually Decrease in Summer but Most Cases in Five Years Reported in August

A local community outbreak of pertussis (whooping cough) continues to increase with a growing number of disease clusters in central Ohio. In fact, even though the incidence of pertussis usually declines in the summer, more cases were reported in August than in any other month since January 2005.

In August, 115 cases of pertussis were reported with 64 confirmed. Additionally, 28 percent of all 2010 cases were reported in August. From January through August of this year, 410 cases were reported in Columbus and Franklin County with 258 confirmed. Last year in Franklin County, there were 350 reported with 198 confirmed cases.

Health officials are urging anyone with a baby in their life to get a pertussis booster shot to help protect infants who are at greater risk of hospitalizations and life-threatening complications. Eight percent of all 2010 cases this year have been reported in infants less than 6 months. Additionally, infants also accounted for 65 percent of all hospitalized cases in Columbus and Franklin County.

“Immunity from the vaccine weakens over time, so teenagers and adults are at risk of getting pertussis and passing it on to babies in their lives,” said Dr. Mysheika LeMaile-Williams, Columbus Public Health’s medical director and assistant health commissioner. “We urge everyone to get a booster shot to help protect themselves and their entire families from a life threatening, but preventable illness.”

This school year, all students entering seventh grade also are required to get a booster dose of Tdap in order to stay in school. Columbus Public Health is holding two special walk in immunization clinics for pertussis booster shots and other school required vaccines from 3-6:30 p.m. on Sept. 8 and from 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. on Sept. 15. The Franklin County Board of Health is holding two special clinics by appointment on Sept. 8 from 4:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. and on Sept. 11 from 9:00 a.m. – Noon for pertussis booster shots and other school required vaccines. Shots are also available at all regularly scheduled public health immunization clinics sponsored by both departments.

“Pertussis is a bacterial respiratory disease that spreads easily by close contact with secretions so it’s highly contagious in school settings,” says Franklin County Health Commissioner Susan Tilgner.

“Booster shots help keep kids in school and protect the entire community.”

For more information on pertussis and public health immunization clinics, visit www.publichealth.columbus.gov or www.franklincountyohio.gov/health.