



Just the Fax

A fax bulletin from Molina Healthcare of Washington – November 18, 2024

Washington State Sees Steep Increase in Whooping Cough Cases (Medicaid, Marketplace, Medicare)

The **Washington State Department of Health (DOH)** has issued an urgent health advisory regarding a **sharp increase in reported cases of pertussis (whooping cough)** across the state. As of November 2, 2024, there have been **1,193 reported cases**, compared to just 51 cases at this time last year. Whooping cough has now been reported in **31 counties** across the state, with the highest rates in **Chelan, Clark, and Whitman counties**.

What is Whooping Cough?

Whooping cough is a highly contagious bacterial infection caused by *Bordetella pertussis*. Early symptoms can resemble those of the common cold, such as a runny nose, mild cough, and low-grade fever. However, the infection can progress to severe coughing fits that may last for weeks or even months and can lead to serious complications, especially in infants and young children.

The Importance of Vaccination

Vaccination remains the most effective way to prevent pertussis, particularly in young children. The **DTaP vaccine** (Diphtheria, Tetanus, and Pertussis) is recommended for children in a series of shots beginning at 2 months of age. Immunizing children against pertussis not only protects them but also helps prevent the spread of the disease to vulnerable populations, including infants who are too young to be fully vaccinated and individuals with compromised immune systems.

As a healthcare provider, we encourage you to **ensure that your pediatric patients are up to date on their pertussis vaccinations**. Vaccination is a critical tool in reducing the spread of this contagious disease and protecting public health.

Important Action Steps:

- **If you suspect a patient has whooping cough**, please advise them to contact their healthcare provider for diagnosis and treatment.
- **Report any suspected cases** to your local health department to help track the outbreak.
- **Stay updated:** The DOH updates the *Pertussis Weekly Update* every Friday, which provides the latest information on cases across the state. You can access this at the DOH website: [DOH.WA.Gov/you-and-your-family/illness-and-disease-z/whooping-cough](https://www.doh.wa.gov/you-and-your-family/illness-and-disease-z/whooping-cough)

For more information on symptoms, treatment, and prevention, please visit the CDC's official page on Whooping Cough (Pertussis): [CDC.Gov/Pertussis](https://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/).

DOH is closely monitoring this situation and is working with local health officials to support affected communities. As healthcare providers, your role in identifying, reporting, and treating pertussis is crucial in controlling the spread of this infectious disease.

Thank you for your continued service to Molina members and for your attention to this important matter. Please contact your local health department for further guidance or if you have any questions.