Whooping Cough: What You Need to Know

**What is Whooping Cough?**
- Whooping cough, also known as “pertussis,” is a highly contagious respiratory disease characterized by severe coughing fits.
- Whooping cough may lead to complications, such as pneumonia or rib fracture.

**What are the Signs and Symptoms of Whooping Cough?**
- The first signs and symptoms of whooping cough are like those of a common cold, including cough, runny nose, sneezing, and low-grade fever. As the disease progresses, a persistent, severe cough can develop. The coughing fits can make breathing difficult. The cough can last for up to three months or more.
- The whooping sound is usually heard as a person inhales after a coughing fit. This sound is less common among teens and adults.

**How to Help Prevent Whooping Cough**
- Whooping cough is spread through bacteria released into the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes. People in close contact can breathe in the pertussis bacteria and become infected.
- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the best way to help prevent whooping cough is to get vaccinated.
- Immunity against whooping cough can wear off about five to 10 years after completion of the childhood vaccination series, leaving adolescents and adults susceptible to the disease.
- Parents of adolescents ages 10-18 and adults should talk to their healthcare provider to see if they need a Tetanus Toxoid, Reduced Diphtheria Toxoid, and Acellular Pertussis Vaccine, Adsorbed (Tdap) or Tdap booster vaccine.

**Recent Whooping Cough Activity**
- Several states, including Michigan, Ohio, New York and Pennsylvania, reported increases in cases in 2010 compared to 2009.
- In 2010, the California Department of Public Health declared a whooping cough epidemic and reported the most whooping cough cases in 65 years.

**Facts and Figures About Whooping Cough**
- In 2009, nearly 17,000 cases of whooping cough were reported in the United States, but many more are believed to go undiagnosed and unreported.
- According to one study, pertussis may affect as many as 3.3 million adolescents and adults in the United States each year.
- According to the CDC’s National Health Interview Survey in 2009, only 6.6 percent of individuals 19-64 years of age have received a Tdap vaccine since a vaccine for adults first became available.