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NEWS RELEASE

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Whooping Cough Cases in SE Idaho Increasing *Free Childhood Immunization Clinic to be Held May 20th*

Eastern Idaho – Pertussis, also known as whooping cough, is a highly contagious respiratory tract infection. Although it initially resembles an ordinary cold, whooping cough may eventually turn more serious and can be fatal, especially in babies less than 1 year of age. Whooping cough is known for uncontrollable, violent coughing which often makes it hard to breathe.

There have been eight confirmed cases of whooping cough in SE Idaho since the beginning of 2013 with five of those cases reported in the last month. Many states surrounding Idaho, Montana and Washington in particular, have had high disease rates this year so it is not surprising that more cases are being seen in Idaho. Many Idahoans were vaccinated last year in response to an infant whooping cough death in Pocatello last May.

The **best** way to prevent pertussis and other diseases is to get your child vaccinated. “Parents who follow recommended immunization guidelines can avoid unnecessary cases of whooping cough, meningitis, and other serious illness. Protecting children from preventable diseases along with boosting Idaho’s immunization rate is a top priority of Eastern Idaho Public Health District (EIPHD), the Eastern Idaho Immunization Task Force, and other partners,” stated Gary Rillema, Family and Community Health Services Division Director at EIPHD.

Due to the increasing whooping cough cases in the region and EIPHD’s goal of increasing immunization rates, EIPHD will be offering a free immunization clinic to all children ages 18 years and younger who are in need of immunizations. Foreign travel immunizations are not included. We will be billing Medicaid and private insurance companies so please bring your card with you. There will be no out-of-pocket cost to participants.

What: Free Immunization Clinic
Date: Monday, May 20, 2013
Time: 3:00 – 6:00 p.m.
Place: Eastern Idaho Public Health District, 1250 Hollipark Drive, Idaho Falls
Who: All children ages 18 years and younger in need of immunizations
Contact: Please call (208) 533-3235 to schedule an appointment.

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In addition to vaccination, parents can also help protect infants and children from whooping cough by keeping them away, as much as possible, from anyone who has cold symptoms or is coughing.

It is also important to recognize the symptoms of whooping cough and seek medical attention if necessary.

Early symptoms of whooping cough can last for 1 to 2 weeks and usually include:

- Runny nose
- Low-grade fever (generally minimal throughout the course of the disease)
- Mild, occasional cough
- Apnea — a pause in breathing (in infants)

As the disease progresses, the traditional symptoms of whooping cough appear and include:

- Fits of many, rapid coughs followed by a high-pitched "whoop"
- Vomiting (throwing up)
- Exhaustion (very tired) after coughing fits

If you have any questions about whooping cough, childhood vaccinations, or the free immunization clinic, please call James Corbett, Immunization Coordinator at EIPHD at (208) 533-3223 or check our website at www.phd7.idaho.gov.

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