

# Williams County Health Department

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## PRESS RELEASE

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Williams County Health Department Responding to Increase in Whooping Cough Cases

*Residents Encouraged to Stay Up to Date on Vaccinations and Watch for Symptoms*

Montpelier, OH – The Williams County Health Department is reporting a 325% increase in Pertussis (Whooping Cough) cases this year, **from a total of 4 confirmed cases in 2025 up to 17 confirmed cases so far in 2026**. The Health Department is working to identify exposures, notify those who may have been affected, and help prevent further spread in the community.

Pertussis, also known as Whooping Cough, is a highly contagious respiratory illness that spreads easily when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or has close contact with others. Symptoms often begin like a common cold, but can quickly turn into severe coughing fits that last for weeks and make it difficult to breathe, sleep, eat, or drink. Because it spreads so easily, one person can unknowingly infect others before realizing they are sick.

Pertussis can become very serious and may lead to complications such as pneumonia, hospitalization, or breathing problems, especially for:

- Infants, especially those too young to be fully vaccinated
- Pregnant women
- Older adults
- People with asthma or other respiratory conditions
- People with weakened immune systems

Anyone experiencing symptoms should stay home, avoid close contact with others, and contact a healthcare provider, especially if they have been around someone who is sick.

The Health Department is working closely with families and community partners to identify close contacts, provide guidance, and help stop further spread. People who may have been exposed are being contacted directly.

“While pertussis can spread easily, we have clear protocols in place to help protect the community,” said Nathan Hoffer, Director of Nursing at the Williams County Health Department. “We are working closely with our partners to identify exposures, support families, and limit further spread in our community.”

**Symptoms to watch for:**

- Runny or stuffy nose
- Cough that gets worse over time
- Severe coughing fits
- “Whooping” sound when breathing in after coughing
- Vomiting after coughing
- Extreme tiredness after coughing
- Pauses in breathing, especially in infants
- Low-grade fever

Vaccination is the best protection against pertussis. The Williams County Health Department encourages all residents to stay up to date on recommended vaccines. This includes the DTaP vaccine for children and the Tdap booster for teens and adults. Vaccines help protect you and also help protect people who are more likely to get very sick. This includes infants, pregnant women, older adults, and people with weakened immune systems or respiratory conditions.

Adults who have not had a Tdap booster, especially those who are around infants, should talk with their healthcare provider or the Health Department about getting vaccinated. The Health Department can help people check their vaccine records and schedule appointments.

The Health Department will share updates as needed.

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For more information go to [www.williamscountyhealth.org](http://www.williamscountyhealth.org) or call 419-485-3141.