



### **Health Department working with schools and healthcare providers to investigate**

On Dec. 14, the New Mexico Department of Health (NMDOH) reported 14 whooping cough cases at several Lea County schools, since November 2017, with most of the infections occurring among elementary school students.

Whooping cough, also called pertussis, is a highly contagious respiratory illness that is spread by coughing and sneezing while in close contact with others. Left untreated, whooping cough can spread from a single infected person for several weeks. The best way to avoid getting whooping cough is by getting vaccinated.

NMDOH encouraged residents to get tested if they experience signs and symptoms of pertussis. Symptoms usually begin with cold symptoms such as a cough, runny nose, sore throat and usually little or no fever. After several days, the cough may become more severe; it may come in spasms or as a series of coughs without a chance to breathe between coughs. There may be a gasp or “whoop,” or gagging or vomiting at the end of the coughing spasm.

Those unvaccinated from whooping cough can be treated with antibiotics. Infants who get whooping cough can become very ill and may develop pneumonia or other serious complications.

“If your child is sick, please do not take your child to daycare or school. This will only spread the illness to other children and their families,” advised Lynn Gallagher, Secretary of Health. “If you

## Whooping cough infections identified in Lea County

Written by Staff Reports

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think that your child may have whooping cough, please take your child to their healthcare provider to be evaluated, tested and treated.”

To help prevent the spread of whooping cough, the following good hygiene practices are recommended:

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.

Put your used tissue in the waste basket.

Cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow, not your hands, if you don't have a tissue.

Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

Use an alcohol-based hand rub if soap and water are not available.

**Please visit [www.cdc.gov/pertussis](http://www.cdc.gov/pertussis) to learn more .**