WALWORTH COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE...

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CASES OF WHOOPING COUGH IN EAST TROY SCHOOLS

There have been 35 confirmed and probable cases of whooping cough, also called pertussis, in East Troy High School and Middle School since November. Health officials expect to identify more cases as the investigation continues and the disease may begin to present in students at other local schools.

Walworth County Health Officer Janis Ellefsen is urging parents, especially those in East Troy, to contact their health care provider's office as soon as possible if anyone in their family shows signs of the disease. The hallmark of whooping cough is severe coughing "fits" which may be accompanied by a loud crowing or "whooping" sound as victims struggle to inhale air.

It is important to note that the cough may be mild and without the hallmark "whoop", especially in older children and adults. In these individuals, the cough may seem more like a typical cough that can accompany a cold or bronchitis, though it usually lasts longer.

Students who are experiencing symptoms of whooping cough should stay out of school until the day *after* they have completed a full five days of antibiotics treatment in order to contain the spread of the disease.

The spread and symptoms of pertussis is reduced with antibiotic treatment if caught early. It also is one of many diseases infants, children, and adults are vaccinated against. While immunization is important, no vaccine is 100% effective and those who have received the vaccine may still get and spread the disease to others.

While most children and adults recover from pertussis with nothing but a memory of a long-lasting, nagging cough, babies under the age of 1 are prone to complications, hospitalizations, and death from the disease. Also at risk are those with underlying health conditions and suppressed immune systems.

If you have a student who is coughing, please contact the Walworth County Division of Public Health at 262-741-3140 or walcoph@co.walworth.wi.us.