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Seven Confirmed Cases of Pertussis in Southeast: SEARHC Urges Community Vigilance

JUNEAU, Alaska – SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium (SEARHC) has confirmed seven cases of pertussis, commonly known as whooping cough, in Southeast Alaska since June 2024. These cases are part of a broader increase in pertussis cases across Alaska, with 130 cases reported to the Alaska Section of Epidemiology. SEARHC is taking proactive steps to address the situation and urges the community to remain vigilant.

Pertussis is a highly contagious respiratory disease that can cause severe coughing fits and difficulty breathing, particularly dangerous for infants, the elderly and those with compromised immune systems. Dr. Cate Buley, SEARHC’s Chief Medical Officer, emphasized the importance of community awareness and prompt action.

“We want to ensure that the public is fully informed about the risks associated with pertussis and the steps they can take to protect themselves and their loved ones,” said Dr. Buley. “Early diagnosis and vaccination are key to preventing the spread of this illness.”

The confirmed cases serve as a reminder of the ongoing pertussis activity in the state. SEARHC is actively working with local and state health authorities to monitor the situation and ensure that appropriate measures are in place to safeguard public health. There has been moderate respiratory illness activity due to viruses, especially COVID, this summer in Southeast.

SEARHC recommends that anyone experiencing symptoms such as persistent coughing or difficulty breathing seek medical care immediately. Early intervention is critical in managing pertussis and preventing its spread. Additionally, it is important for individuals to ensure that their pertussis vaccination (Tdap for adults and adolescents and DTaP for children under the age of six) is up to date, as vaccination is one of the most effective ways to protect against the disease. Those unsure of their vaccination status should use the [State of Alaska app – Docket](#) to check their status or contact their local healthcare clinic.

Practicing good hygiene is also essential in preventing the spread of pertussis. Individuals who are experiencing symptoms or who have been exposed to someone with pertussis should use respiratory precautions, including wearing a mask and practicing thorough hand hygiene.



Dr. Buley concluded, “By taking these precautions, we can help protect our community and ensure a safe and healthy environment for everyone. SEARHC is committed to supporting the health and well-being of our region, and we urge everyone to stay informed and take action.”

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About SEARHC

Established in 1975, SEARHC is one of the largest Native-run healthcare organization in the United States. As an independent and nonprofit health Consortium, SEARHC provides health-related services in 27 communities throughout Southeast Alaska. Visit searhc.org for more information.