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PRESS RELEASE-For Immediate Release

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SCPHD Warns-Cases of Pertussis (Whooping Cough) Increasing in the Magic Valley

TWIN FALLS- Health officials have identified numerous cases of pertussis (whooping cough) in the last two weeks in Filer and Buhl. Local exposures have occurred and are being investigated. It is important for parents to check their children's immunization status and also check their own immunize records. Adults can spread the disease just as easily as children.

South Central Public Health District (SCPHD) considers pertussis a serious disease because it is frequently complicated by pneumonia and ear infections (especially in infants) although death is rare. Early signs include a persistent cough that follows a cold. The cough usually occurs in explosive bursts ending with a typical high-pitched whoop as the person catches their breath. It can also cause vomiting. Between bursts of coughing, the person appears well; but the coughing attacks can continue for four to six weeks. Older children or adults may have less severe symptoms. People with a cough are contagious for three weeks if untreated and for five days after treatment has begun.

Persons experiencing symptoms of pertussis, especially a persistent cough lasting more than two weeks, should consult their health care provider. Special tests may be done to confirm the diagnosis. Care should be taken to limit exposure to other people through good cough hygiene, covering the mouth when coughing, and washing hands often. Antibiotics are used to treat the disease and are also given to known contacts of the person with pertussis in an effort to control the spread of the disease.

The DTaP immunization, which contains pertussis vaccine, is available at SCPHD for children younger than six. A pertussis booster shot (Tdap) is also available for anyone age seven

or older. Protection from the vaccine wears off over time. A booster shot (Tdap) provides protection for adolescents and adults. For more information on pertussis, please contact SCPHD Epidemiologist Manager, Mary Jensen, at 737-5969.

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