



News Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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WHOOPING COUGH EPIDEMIC GROWS – HEALTH OFFICIALS URGE VACCINATION AND TIMELY DIAGNOSIS

SACRAMENTO – California’s epidemic of pertussis (whooping cough) shows no signs of slowing, Dr. Mark Horton, director of the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), warned today. As of July 27, the number of illnesses from the disease this year had climbed to 2,174, a six-fold increase from the 349 illnesses reported for the same period last year. In addition, a San Diego County infant has become the seventh to die from pertussis this year.

“The pertussis epidemic is a sobering and tragic reminder that diseases long thought controlled can return with a vengeance,” Horton said. “We can protect ourselves and the most vulnerable in our community by getting vaccinated today.”

California is on pace to have the most cases of pertussis reported in more than half a century. Infants are having the highest rates at 1.1 case for every 1,000 infants.

“Because immunity from pertussis vaccine or disease wears off, Californians—especially family members and caregivers of infants—should make sure they get their shots,” Horton said.

In addition to the typical series of five childhood pertussis immunizations, CDPH recommends an adolescent-adult pertussis booster vaccine (Tdap) for everyone 10 years or older who has not yet received it, especially:

- women of childbearing age, before, during, or immediately after pregnancy, and
- other people, including household contacts, caregivers, and health care workers, who have contact with pregnant women or infants.

Children 7-9 years of age who did not receive all of their routine childhood shots are recommended to receive a Tdap booster dose.

The pertussis vaccination series can begin when an infant is 6 weeks of age. Infants, however, are not adequately protected until they received their first three shots by age 6 months. The series of shots that most children receive wears off by the time they reach middle school.

For new mothers and anyone with close contact with infants, CDPH is providing Tdap vaccine at birthing hospitals, community health centers, Native American health centers and local health departments.

A typical case of pertussis in children and adults starts with a cough and runny nose for one-to-two weeks, followed by weeks to months of rapid coughing fits that sometimes ends with a whooping sound. Fever is rare.

The diagnosis of pertussis is often delayed in young infants, whose are less likely to have a notable cough – caregivers and health care providers should consider the possibility of pertussis in infants with coughs or colds to help in prompt diagnosis and treatment.

[Click to review the July 27, 2010 county-by-county rates.](#)

[Click to hear what pertussis \(whooping cough\) sounds like.](#)

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