



News Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 19, 2010

PH10-048U

**(UPDATED: corrects number of pertussis cases,
fixes Web link)**

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CDPH BROADENS RECOMMENDATIONS FOR VACCINATING AGAINST PERTUSSIS: IMMUNIZATION KEY TO CONTROLLING WHOOPIING COUGH

SACRAMENTO – To protect Californians against the current epidemic levels of pertussis (whooping cough) health experts at the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) today broadened recommendations for immunizing against pertussis and reiterated the importance of getting vaccinated.

“We are facing what could be the worst year for pertussis that this state has seen in more than 50 years,” said CDPH Chief of the Center for Infectious Disease Dr. Gilberto Chávez, who also is the state’s epidemiologist. “We are urging health providers to broaden their use of the pertussis vaccine and we are urging Californians to take the simple step of getting vaccinated to prevent pertussis.”

In addition to the typical series of childhood pertussis immunizations, CDPH now recommends an adolescent-adult pertussis booster vaccine (Tdap) for:

- anyone 7 years and older who is not fully immunized, including those who are more than 64 years old,
- women of childbearing age, before, during, or immediately after pregnancy, and
- other people who have contact with pregnant women or infants.

“Considering that immunity from pertussis vaccine or disease wears off and that most adults are susceptible to pertussis, now is the time for Californians to get immunized to protect themselves and their families,” said Chávez. “In particular, all family members and caregivers of infants should get the booster vaccine.”

California physicians expressed support for the new expanded vaccination guidelines. “Pediatricians are extremely concerned about the pertussis epidemic in California,” said Kris Calvin, Chief Executive Officer of the American Academy of Pediatrics, California. “We appreciate and fully support CDPH’s efforts.” Family physicians are equally concerned. “The new recommendations will help tremendously in addressing pertussis prevention,” said Jack Chou, M.D., president of the California Academy of Family Physicians. “We support the efforts of the California Department of Public Health.”

Pertussis has reached an epidemic level in California. Through July 13 of this year, 1,496 cases of pertussis were reported, a five-fold increase from the same period last year when 304 cases were reported.

Five infants, all under three months of age, have died from pertussis this year. Unimmunized or incompletely immunized young infants are particularly vulnerable.

The pertussis vaccination series can begin when an infant is 6 weeks of age. Infants, however, are not adequately protected by vaccination until the initial series of three shots is complete. The series of shots that most children receive wears off by the time they finish middle school. Neither vaccination nor illness from pertussis provides lifetime immunity. 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.

California has taken the following steps to combat pertussis:

- Confirmed pertussis to be at epidemic levels in California, in line to break a 50 year record for recorded cases.
- Implementation of a free postpartum tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (Tdap) program for hospitals with funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).
- Promoted the infant “cocooning strategy,” wherein individuals in close contact with infants are vaccinated.
- The development of bilingual educational materials for distribution to local public health departments, hospitals, and healthcare providers; news releases to inform the public, and conducting statewide round-table meetings with ethnic media.
- Development of clinical guidance materials to 14,000 healthcare providers as well as the California Medical Association and the California Hospital Association.
- Partnering with the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on a pertussis investigation in the Central Valley region.

Complete information about the Department's response is available at <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/immunize/Pages/TdapExpansionProgram.aspx>.

www.cdph.ca.gov

