



Prevent Whooping Cough Deaths in California

Vaccinate to protect against fatal whooping cough disease

On April 18, 2019, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) announced that an infant from Orange County had died from pertussis (whooping cough). This is the first confirmed infant death from the disease since 2018.

Pertussis epidemic expected for 2019

Pertussis is an acute respiratory disease that can cause serious illness, especially for infants age six months and younger. This is a highly contagious bacterial disease that spreads through the air by coughing and can last for months. About 50 percent of infants less than age one are hospitalized.

Since 1980, the number of pertussis cases has increased. Another epidemic is expected in 2019 for Californians since pertussis is cyclical with peaks every three to five years. Cases of pertussis have been reported as follow:

- 9,000 cases were reported in California during the 2010 epidemic, the most in over 60 years, including 10 infant deaths.
- 11,209 cases were reported during the 2014 epidemic (five times baseline levels), which included two infant deaths and hundreds of hospitalizations.

Vaccination is the best prevention

The best way to prevent pertussis is to get vaccinated. The CDPH and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend the following vaccines for pregnant women, young children, preteens, and adults. For additional information about vaccine products, refer to www.immunize.org/askexperts/experts_per.asp.

Vaccine	Recommended for age group
Tdap	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pregnant women early during 27–36 week gestation period • Everyone age 11 or older • All health care workers, regardless of age, if they have not previously received Tdap and regardless of time of last Td
DTaP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ages 2, 4, 6, and 15 to 18 months; booster at ages 4 to 6 years

THIS UPDATE APPLIES TO CALIFORNIA PROVIDERS:

- Physicians
- Participating Physician Groups
- Hospitals
- Ancillary Providers

LINES OF BUSINESS:

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 - Sacramento
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Pregnant women

The CDPH and CDC urge all pregnant women to get vaccinated against whooping cough as early as possible during the third trimester of every pregnancy to give unprotected newborns the best protection.

Symptoms and different stages of pertussis

Pertussis disease can be divided into three stages.

Stage	Duration	Symptoms
Catarrhal	1–2 weeks	Includes a runny nose, sneezing, low-grade fever, and a mild cough (all similar symptoms to the common cold).
Paroxysmal	1–6 weeks, can persist for up to 10 weeks	The characteristic symptom is a burst, or paroxysm, of numerous, rapid coughs. At the end of the cough paroxysm, the patient can suffer from a long inhaling effort that is characterized by a high-pitched whoop (hence the name, "whooping cough"). Infants and young children often appear very ill and distressed, and may turn blue and vomit. "Whooping" does not necessarily have to accompany the cough.
Convalescent	2–6 weeks, may last for months	Although the cough usually disappears after 2–3 weeks, paroxysms may recur whenever the patient suffers any subsequent respiratory infection. The disease is usually milder in adolescents and adults, consisting of a persistent cough similar to that found in other upper respiratory infections. However, these individuals are still able to transmit the disease to others, including unimmunized or incompletely immunized infants.

More resources

Additional resources about pertussis can be found on the CDPH website at www.cdph.ca.gov.

The *Immunization Action Coalition: "Questions & Answers"* handout can be found at www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4212.pdf. Also, pertussis videos for waiting or exam rooms can be downloaded from www.immunize.org/votw/pertussis-videos.asp.

Additional information

If you have questions regarding the information contained in this update, contact the Health Net Provider Services Center by email at provider_services@healthnet.com within 60 days, by telephone or through the Health Net provider website as listed in the right-hand column on page 1.