



**ALAMEDA COUNTY HEALTH CARE SERVICES AGENCY
PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

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To: Parents & Guardians
From: Alameda County Public Health Dept, Alameda County Office of Education
Re: Pertussis (Whooping Cough)

There has been a dramatic increase in whooping cough (pertussis) infections, particularly among infants and young children in California and the Bay Area. This increase has led Alameda County Public Health Department (ACPHD) officials to increase awareness and remind residents to get a whooping cough vaccination.

Whooping cough is a very contagious illness spread by coughing and sneezing. It can be deadly in young infants. The symptoms of whooping cough are different depending on your age. Infants and children may have a runny nose and a pause in their breathing, but little cough. Some infants may have coughing 'fits' that lead to a whooping sound. In adolescents and adults, symptoms may start like a common cold with a cough that lasts for weeks or months. Fever is rare.

Vaccination is the best defense against whooping cough. Parents need to be very proactive in making sure that they and their children have up-to-date vaccinations.

- **The most vulnerable populations are infants and children who have not been fully immunized.**
- **The best protection for children is to be vaccinated.**
- **Those in close contact with children should also be fully immunized, including pregnant women, infant caregivers, and household contacts of newborns.**

Seven California infants (all younger than three months of age) have died from whooping cough so far in 2010. As of August 3, 104 cases of whooping cough were confirmed with another 42 cases under investigation. In 2009, there were 26 cases total. According to the California Department of Public Health, the state is on pace to have the highest rate of disease in 47 years.

Public health officials expect whooping cough cases to increase as the school year begins. All women of childbearing age should get a booster shot to prevent spreading whooping cough to newborns and infants. Babies and young children should be fully immunized for Tetanus, Diphtheria and Pertussis (DTaP) by age 6. For everyone 7 years or older there is a whooping cough booster shot (Tdap).

If your younger children have not received the full DTaP vaccination series, or your older children need a Tdap booster shot, please see your medical provider. If you do not have medical coverage, attend one of the free back-to-school clinics (visit www.acphd.org) or call Alameda County Public Health Clearinghouse toll free at (888) 604-4636 for a doctor or medical plan referral.