



JOINT NEWS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 25, 2010

CALIFORNIA PERTUSSIS EPIDEMIC SENDS WARNING

MEDIA CONTACT

Dave Fotsch
PIO -- CDHD
(208) 327-8639
(208) 871-1712 cell
dfotsch@cdhd.idaho.gov

-OR-

Laurie Boston
PIO -- SWDH
(208) 455-5325
(208) 899-1268 cell
laurie.boston@phd3.idaho.gov

The state of California has declared an epidemic of Pertussis, also known as Whooping Cough, on the heels of more than 900 confirmed cases and the deaths of five babies. While there is no evidence of a similar rise in pertussis cases in Idaho, public health officials in southwest Idaho believe this is a good time for parents to check the immunization status of their children.

Pertussis is a highly contagious disease that begins with cold-like symptoms, such as sneezing, runny nose, low-grade fever, and a mild cough. Over 1-2 weeks the cough may become much worse. Symptoms may include a long series of coughs ("coughing fits" or spasms) followed by a whooping noise. Persons with pertussis may have a series of coughs and then may vomit, turn blue, or experience difficulty in catching their breath. Untreated, pertussis can develop into pneumonia, seizures and encephalitis. It's particularly dangerous for children younger than a year old. Most pertussis deaths occur in unvaccinated children or in children too young to be vaccinated.

"Infants under six months of age and the unimmunized are at greatest risk," said Teresa Collins, RN, Immunizations Program Manager at Central District Health (CDHD). "This is a vaccine preventable disease. Children need to be vaccinated against it. Many infants who get pertussis are infected by parents, older siblings, or other caregivers who might not know they have the disease, thus the importance of parents, other family members, and the caregivers being up-to-date and boosted with Tdap."

Parents and those spending time around young children should also contact their medical providers about pertussis immunizations.

"People with pertussis usually spread the disease by coughing or sneezing while in close contact with others, who then breathe in the pertussis bacteria," said Jennifer Tripp, Staff Epidemiologist for Southwest District Health. "It is important for us to learn from California and get our children and family members

-MORE-

CALIFORNIA PERTUSSIS EPIDEMIC SENDS WARNING

Page Two

June 25, 2010

immunized against the disease because protection from the childhood vaccine fades over time," said Tripp. For more information, call the Central District Health Department ShotLine at (208) 321-2229 and/or call Southwest District Health at (208) 455-5345.

ICentral District Health and Southwest District Health also recommends.

The best way to prevent pertussis is to get vaccinated. If you have children less than 7 years of age who have not been completely immunized against Pertussis (particularly infants under one year), you should speak with your child's immunization provider (doctor or health department) about vaccination. Boosters are available for adolescents and adults containing tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis, or Tdap. Pre-teens going to the doctor for their regular check-up at age 11 or 12 years should get a dose of Tdap. The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) also recommends the Tdap vaccine to help protect adults from pertussis and to reduce the risk of transmitting pertussis to infants and those most at risk of developing serious or life-threatening complications.

Anyone exposed to or having the symptoms of pertussis should seek medical care and treatment, especially if they develop cold-like symptoms or a cough. Giving antibiotics early can help your child get well faster and will lower the chances of spreading the disease to others. Adults exposed to pertussis should also be given antibiotics to prevent the disease, even if they have been vaccinated.

When possible, young infants should be kept away from people with a cough. **A doctor should promptly evaluate infants with any coughing illness.**

As always, care should be taken to practice good hygiene. Remind your children to cover their mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, dispose of used tissues properly, and wash their hands often. These are key prevention measures in reducing the spread of any respiratory illness.

###