



For Immediate Release:

June 26, 2014

Whooping Cough Cases Increase in Los Angeles County

Residents are encouraged to seek vaccination and early treatment

LOS ANGELES – Pertussis (whooping cough) activity continues to increase throughout Los Angeles County, a total of 345 confirmed and probable cases with no deaths have been reported in 2014. The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health is encouraging residents who have not received all recommended doses of a pertussis-containing vaccine to arrange for vaccination and those with pertussis-like symptoms to seek medical care immediately.

“As we continue to see increased pertussis activity, we are asking residents to make certain that everyone in your family has been vaccinated to help stop the spread of pertussis,” said Jonathan E. Fielding, MD, MPH, Director of Public Health and County Health Officer. “Being vaccinated protects your family and reduces the chance that pertussis will spread to our most vulnerable residents – infants who are too young to be fully vaccinated.”

As of June 23, Public Health has received reports of 345 confirmed and probable cases compared to 295 and 154 confirmed and probable cases reported for all of 2013 and 2012, respectively. A number of the cases have occurred among elementary, middle, and high school students throughout Los Angeles County. Public Health is currently investigating 356 suspect cases of Pertussis.

Pertussis Symptoms and Complications

Early symptoms of pertussis are similar to cold symptoms and include a runny or stuffy nose, sneezing, watery eyes, a low-grade fever, and a mild occasional cough. A week or two later, more severe rapid attacks of coughing develop, which can be so severe that they cause vomiting and broken rib bones. In young children and some teens and adults, the fits of coughing are followed by a high pitched “whooping” sound that is made when gasping for air. Infants may not have the typical “whoop” but may get very tired, stop breathing, vomit, or have seizures.

“Pertussis can be a serious illness in all ages, but for infants it can be tragic,” said Dr. Fielding. “Pertussis symptoms can get worse very fast and infants can become seriously ill or die without warning. About half of infants younger than 1 year of age who have pertussis will need to be hospitalized and in 2014, and three California infants have already died this year due to pertussis. To help prevent infant deaths, pregnant women are recommended to receive a Pertussis vaccination in the third-trimester of each pregnancy.”

Pertussis can be treated with antibiotics. Thus, it is important to contact a health care provider right away if:

- You/your child have a cough and have been exposed to someone with pertussis.
- You/your child have pertussis symptoms, such as uncontrollable coughing attacks.

It is especially important to seek care immediately if you live with or care for an infant, due to their high risk for complications.



Recommended Pertussis Vaccinations

The best way to prevent pertussis is to get vaccinated. Pertussis vaccines, which are recommended from infancy through adulthood, can prevent infection, reduce complications, and prevent the spread of pertussis. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends the following doses of pertussis vaccine for infants, children, adolescents, and adults:

- DTaP (diphtheria, tetanus, and acellular pertussis) vaccine at 2, 4, and 6 months, between 15 and 18 months of age, and between 4 and 6 years of age.
- A booster dose of Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, and acellular pertussis) vaccine at 11 or 12 years of age.
- One dose of Tdap vaccine for all adults (19 years of age and older) who were not previously vaccinated with Tdap, especially parents, grandparents, day care workers, and anyone else who will be in contact with an infant.
- One dose of Tdap vaccine during each pregnancy, preferably at 27 through 36 weeks gestation. This provides the newborn with some immunity and reduces the chance that he or she will be infected during birth or in the home.

These vaccines can prevent most cases of pertussis and vaccinated individuals who become infected will likely have less severe symptoms and will experience fewer complications.

School and Childcare Immunization Requirements

In California, children entering into childcare or kindergarten must show proof that they have received the recommended number of DTaP vaccine doses and students entering the 7th grade must show proof of one dose of Tdap vaccine.

Resources

Residents are encouraged to ask their regular health care provider about pertussis vaccinations, which are covered at no-cost by most health plans. Many pharmacies also offer pertussis vaccinations and some accept insurance. Residents who do not have a regular provider or insurance for vaccinations can dial the LA County Information Line at 2-1-1 or visit www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip for a list of no-cost and low-cost vaccination providers. Individuals should call ahead to check vaccine availability, cost and eligibility.

For more information about pertussis vaccinations, visit:

- www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip
- www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/Pertussis.aspx

The Department of Public Health is committed to protecting and improving the health of the nearly 10 million residents of Los Angeles County. Through a variety of programs, community partnerships and services, Public Health oversees environmental health, disease control, and community and family health. Public Health comprises nearly 4,000 employees and has an annual budget exceeding \$900 million. To learn more about Public Health and the work we do please visit <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov>, visit our YouTube channel at <http://www.youtube.com/lapublichealth>, find us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/lapublichealth>, or follow us on Twitter: @LAPublicHealth.