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EDMUND G. BROWN JR.
Governor

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To: CDPH Partners

Pertussis, also known as whooping cough, is a highly contagious bacterial disease that can be spread by coughing. People with pertussis have severe coughing attacks that can last for months. Infants too young for pertussis vaccination are at greatest risk for life-threatening cases of pertussis.

As California Department of Public Health (CDPH) Director and State Health Officer, I am asking that CDPH partners across the state help prevent further infant hospitalizations and deaths from pertussis. I recognize the value of working in partnership with our community and know that with collaboration from you, we can increase awareness about the importance of vaccination against this serious, yet preventable, disease.

Pertussis is Widespread in California

A pertussis epidemic has been declared in California in 2014. As of June 24, 4,558 pertussis cases had been reported to CDPH, more than the number reported in all of 2013.¹ The disease is cyclical and peaks every 3 to 5 years. With the state's previous peak occurring in 2010, another epidemic year was not unexpected, but is no less concerning.

Infants too young to be fully immunized are most likely to be hospitalized or die from pertussis. Of the cases reported so far this year, 177 cases were infants <4 months of age; 89 (50%) of whom were hospitalized. Tragically, 3 infants, all too young to be vaccinated, have died from pertussis in 2014.¹

The Most Important Strategy: Immunize Women During the Third Trimester of EACH Pregnancy

Vaccination of pregnant women with a booster dose of pertussis-containing vaccine (Tdap) during the third trimester of every pregnancy will help protect young infants who are too young to be vaccinated against pertussis. Maternal antibodies against pertussis are passed from the vaccinated mother to the infant. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommend immunization of all pregnant women with Tdap between 27 and 36 weeks gestation during EACH pregnancy, regardless of whether Tdap vaccine has been received in the past.²

Other Recommendations

It's important that both children and adults are up-to-date on their immunizations. Please help us alert California families, especially pregnant women, by sharing these important health messages:

- Infants should get vaccinated against pertussis without delay. The first dose is routinely recommended at 2 months of age but can be given as early as 6 weeks of age. Even one dose of DTaP may offer protection against fatal pertussis infection. Children need 5 doses of pertussis vaccine by kindergarten (ages 4 – 6 years).
- California students entering 7th grade should receive the Tdap vaccine booster as required by state law.
- Adults should receive a one-time Tdap vaccine booster, especially if they are in contact with infants or if they are healthcare workers who may have contact with infants or pregnant women.

You can also help us raise awareness about preventing pertussis by posting or distributing the following flyers to community members:

- [Expecting? Protect Your Baby from Whooping Cough | Spanish](#)
- [Whooping Cough: What You Need to Know | Spanish](#)

I appreciate your help in the fight against infant deaths from pertussis and believe together we can make a positive impact on the health of California families.

Sincerely,



Ron Chapman, MD, MPH
Director and State Health Officer

References

1. California Department of Public Health. Pertussis Report, June 24, 2014. http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/immunize/Documents/Pertussis_Report_6-24-2014.pdf
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Tdap for Pregnant Women: Information for Providers. <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/pertussis/tdap-pregnancy-hcp.htm>