



Mendocino County Health and Human Services Agency

Healthy People, Healthy Communities

Public Service Announcement

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WHOOPIING COUGH EPIDEMIC LEADS TO CALL TO GET BOOSTER

Whooping cough (pertussis), an illness that can sometimes kill infants, is on the upswing in California and doctors are urging anyone who cares for infants to be sure they and the infant are vaccinated. Most adults have not taken advantage of a booster shot, TDaP, that came out in 2005 and incorporates pertussis with the usual adult tetanus/diphtheria shot.

Dr. John Talarico, who heads the immunization branch of the infectious disease center within the State Department of Public Health, reports that so far this year there have been five infant deaths and 900 cases of whooping cough reported in California. This is a 4-fold increase over last year. Mendocino County to date has no reported cases this year.

The germ that causes whooping cough is spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Symptoms begin with a runny nose and cough for one to two weeks followed by weeks of coughing fits. The disease usually does not kill, those most likely to die are the youngest infants who have not had any immunizations and whose airways are not fully developed.

Parents and caregivers of young infants are urged to be up-to-date on their baby's immunizations. Doctors may want to start immunizations as early as 6 weeks of age if pertussis is prevalent in the community.

Whooping cough is not just a childhood disease and nearly half of all infants who get whooping cough are infected by their parents, so parents and caregivers of infants are urged to get the TDaP vaccination.

The TDaP vaccination for persons 10 to 64 years old are available from healthcare providers, including Mendocino County Community Health at 707-472-2700, where the cost is \$15.

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