



May 11th, 2018

Community Update: High levels of pertussis in Alameda County

What's the situation?

Pertussis, also known as whooping cough, is a contagious disease affecting the lungs. It is caused by a bacteria that can spread when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks near to other people. Pertussis can affect people of all ages but infants younger than 6 months are at greatest risk for severe disease leading to hospitalization and death. The highest rates of pertussis are seen in infants who are too young to have received all their pertussis vaccines, and in teenagers 14 to 17 years old whose pertussis vaccine protection has “worn off”.

Although thousands of cases of pertussis are reported each year in California, the numbers of cases peak every 3 to 5 years. California had large increases in pertussis in 2010 (over 9,000 cases and 10 infant deaths), 2014 (almost 11,000 cases and 2 infant deaths), and 2018 cases are currently increasing. Like the rest of California, Alameda County has also had large increases in pertussis cases in 2010, 2014, and early 2018. We've seen the most cases this year in high school-aged children.

We are issuing this update to inform the public of the current situation and raise awareness of the steps that the public can take to protect their health.

Pertussis facts

- The symptoms of pertussis vary by age. In school-aged children it starts with a cough and runny nose for one to two weeks. The cough worsens and the child might have rapid coughing spells or “fits” that end with a whooping sound or with vomiting. Young infants may not cough. Instead, infants may have spells where they stop breathing and their skin turns purplish or reddish. Adults with pertussis may have a cough that lasts for several weeks.
- People with pertussis can spread the disease from the time they get a runny nose until 3 weeks after their cough started, or until five days of taking the correct antibiotic.
- People with pertussis and their close contacts can prevent spreading the disease if they take the right antibiotics.

What should I do?

- Check with your or your child's health care provider to find out if you/your child are up to date on pertussis vaccine.
- California schools require that all students entering kindergarten are up to date on pertussis vaccine, and that all entering 7th graders have received a booster prior to entering.
- If you are pregnant, talk to your healthcare provider about getting Tdap. Pregnant women should receive a Tdap, during the 3rd trimester of **every** pregnancy, at 27-36 weeks. The vaccinated pregnant mom makes antibodies that pass to the baby to protect him or her from pertussis until they are old enough to receive the pertussis shot. Everyone who will be in close contact with the baby should also be vaccinated before the baby is born.
- If you/your child have pertussis symptoms, see your healthcare provider for testing, diagnosis and treatment before returning to work or school
- If you/your child have pertussis, avoid close contact with others, especially infants and pregnant women until you finish taking all doses of the antibiotic prescribed by your healthcare provider.

Resources

Fact sheets for families

English: <http://eziz.org/assets/docs/IMM-1023.pdf>

Spanish: <http://eziz.org/assets/docs/IMM-1023S.pdf>

Fact sheet for pregnant women

Pregnancy and Whooping Cough (English): <http://eziz.org/assets/docs/IMM-1146.pdf>

Pregnancy and Whooping Cough (Spanish): <http://eziz.org/assets/docs/IMM-1145S.pdf>

Pregnancy and Whooping Cough (Chinese): <http://eziz.org/assets/docs/IMM-1145CH.pdf>

California Department of Public Health Website

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/pertussis.aspx#>

Alameda County Public Health Department website

<http://www.acphd.org/pertussis/pertussis-basics.aspx> .

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