

CALIFORNIA PERTUSSIS EPIDEMIC SENDS WARNING

Parents Urged to Make Sure Children Are Up-to-Date on Vaccinations

With the recent outbreak of pertussis, also known as whooping cough, in California, the Southeastern District Health Department would like to remind people in southeast Idaho to check and make sure that their children and they are up to date on their vaccinations.

Pertussis is caused by the bacteria *Bordetella pertussis*, and is highly contagious. It is one of the most commonly occurring vaccine-preventable diseases in the United States. People with pertussis usually spread the disease by coughing or sneezing.

Most pertussis deaths occur in unvaccinated children or in children too young (under six months of age) to be vaccinated. As a result, it is critical that infants begin the immunization series on schedule. It is also important for parents, siblings, and caregivers to receive a Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis) booster at least every 10 years, since protection from the vaccine declines over the years. Many infants who get pertussis are infected by older children and adults who do not know they have the disease.

Pertussis symptoms can be different depending on how old you are, or whether or not you have been vaccinated. Pertussis symptoms are as follows:

- Pertussis usually starts with cold-like symptoms, and maybe mild cough, but not every runny nose is pertussis. Pertussis is often not suspected or diagnosed until a persistent cough with spasms sets in after 1–2 weeks.
- In infants, the cough may be mild or absent. However, infants may have a symptom known as “apnea.” Apnea is a brief pause in the child’s breathing pattern.
- Infants and children with pertussis can cough violently and rapidly, over and over, until the air is gone from their lungs and they're forced to inhale with a loud "whooping" sound. This extreme coughing can result in vomiting and exhaustion. Illness is generally less severe in adolescents and adults.
- The coughing fits usually last from 1 to 6 weeks, but can go on for up to 10 weeks or more.
- Although children are often exhausted after a coughing fit, they usually appear relatively healthy in-between coughing episodes.

- The illness can be milder (less severe) and the typical "whoop" can be absent in children, adolescents, and adults who have been vaccinated.

It is important to seek treatment when pertussis symptoms first start and it is extremely important to seek medical attention **immediately**, if you or your child is having trouble breathing.

Let's learn from what is occurring in California and protect ourselves, our young ones, and our community by getting vaccinated!

For more information or to schedule a vaccination appointment, call the Southeastern District Health Department at 233-9080 or visit the SDHD website at www.sdhdidaho.org.

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