

Medical Alert
PERTUSSIS
(Whooping Cough)

July 21, 2010 - A Pertussis epidemic has been declared in California. The main target is infants, but the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) has recommended adults obtain boosters in an effort to prevent the spread of the disease. Many cases of whooping cough occur in adults who then spread it to infants who are too young to be protected by vaccine. CDPH especially recommend the booster for new mothers and fathers, family members of infants, healthcare workers, child care workers, and anyone else that may come into contact with infants.

Pertussis is a bacterial infection that is highly contagious and is transferred by direct contact of discharge from respiratory membranes of infected individuals. Symptoms include spasms of severe coughing, whooping, and post-cough vomiting.

Pertussis can be treated with an antibiotic. If you have symptoms of Pertussis, please seek medical care immediately and take precautions such as coughing in your sleeve, washing your hands and avoid close contact with others to help prevent the spread of the disease.

Public health authorities stress vaccination as the best way to protect against the disease. You may obtain the vaccination for free at local California Public Health offices or at the Student Health Center for a small fee. The CDC recommends that children receive Diphtheria, Tetanus, and Pertussis (DTaP) vaccine at ages 2 months, 4 months, 6 months, and 15 to 18 months, with a booster shot at age 4 to 6 and again at 11 or 12 years of age. Adults who did not receive Tdap as a preteen or teenager also should get a dose.

For more information please contact the Student Health Center at 310-506-4316 opt. 3 or visit www.cdc.gov.