

## HEALTH ALERT NETWORK HEALTH DISTRICT 4

### PERTUSSIS ADVISORY FOR HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS

Central District Health Department Urges Physicians and Nurses to Watch  
for Pertussis (Whooping Cough) Cases

August 19, 2010

Due to the California's recent pertussis epidemic, Central District Health Department (CDHD) urges all health care providers to keep pertussis on the rule-out list if patients present with a cough illness. Over the spring and summer California has experienced a very serious pertussis epidemic with over 2,774 cases and 7 deaths. The majority of cases have been in unimmunized infants or under-immunized children.

#### **Diagnosis**

The signs for pertussis can be deceptively mild in the first stage with a mild cough, sneezing, and runny nose. Classic pertussis is characterized by a persistent cough of two or more weeks' duration, which is often accompanied by paroxysmal coughing fits; characteristic inspiratory "whoop"; and post-tussive vomiting.

Young infants: Pertussis is often missed because the initial signs are a runny nose with a mild or undetectable cough. There is no fever. There may be apnea, hypoxia, or seizures.

Adolescents and adults: Most cases go undiagnosed. Bronchitis or asthma are common misdiagnoses. There may be episodes of a choking sensation or sweating.

#### **Laboratory Testing**

Recommended laboratory tests include culture and/or polymerase chain reaction (PCR) of a nasal aspirate (preferred specimen) or nasopharyngeal swab. Direct fluorescent antibody (DFA) tests are not recommended due to poor sensitivity. Testing recommendations can be found at:

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/surv-manual/chpt10-pertussis.htm#7>

#### **Prevention**

CDHD recommends that health care providers take every opportunity to encourage patients to receive the Tdap booster immunization (tetanus-diphtheria-acellular pertussis)

if they have not already done so. Childhood and adolescent immunization recommendations can be found at:

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/recs/schedules/child-schedule.htm#printable>

For additional information contact the Immunizations Program at CDHD at 327-7450 or the Office of Communicable Disease Control & Public Health Preparedness at 327-8625.

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