

HEALTH ALERT NETWORK HEALTH DISTRICT 4

PERTUSSIS ADVISORY FOR SCHOOL NURSES

Please distribute to all school district nursing staff and health techs.

Central District Health Department Urges School Nurses to Watch
for Pertussis (Whooping Cough) Cases Among Returning Students

August 19, 2010

As students return to school after the summer break, Central District Health Department (CDHD) urges all school nurses and health technicians to watch for and evaluate students with cough illnesses. Pertussis (whooping cough) is virtually endemic in Idaho. Although pertussis rates have not reached epidemic levels in Idaho in 2010, 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.

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. The whoop may be absent in older children. Students with any of these symptoms should be referred to their family's primary care physician for evaluation.

CDHD recommends that school nurses take every opportunity to encourage students and their families as well as school employees 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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