



Connie Beck, Director
Social Services | Public Health | Mental Health

news release

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Health & Human Services officials urge vaccination in wake of new pertussis case

Public Health officials were notified late Wednesday that a Eureka teen has tested positive for pertussis, also known as whooping cough, which is a highly contagious respiratory disease.

In a follow-up investigation, communicable disease staff identified 40 possible contacts during the patient's contagious period. All are now being notified.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), pertussis is a cyclical bacterial infection that peaks every three to five years. Immunity, whether from getting the vaccine or from having the disease, typically wears off within five years, leaving previously immune children susceptible again by adolescence.

"Even if the CDC vaccination schedule is closely followed it still sometimes falls short for pertussis in particular, due in part to waning immunity," said Public Health Supervising Communicable Disease Nurse Hava Phillips.

During the 2014 outbreak in Humboldt County, there were over 190 confirmed cases of pertussis. Statewide in 2014, more than 11,000 Californians tested positive. More than 9,000 cases were reported in 2010, with 808 hospitalizations and 10 infant deaths. In 2017 and 2018, no cases were reported in Humboldt County.

The CDC, notes that pertussis can cause serious health effects for people of all ages, but infants are at higher risk.

"About half of infants diagnosed with pertussis will be hospitalized, so it's critically important that pregnant women are vaccinated during their third trimester to provide newborns with maternal antibodies," said Phillips.

CDPH strongly recommends a booster shot for anyone over 11 years old who has not yet received one.

The CDC states that illness typically begins with cold-like symptoms and sometimes a mild cough or fever before progressing to severe coughing fits. In babies, the cough can be minimal or nonexistent. Babies may have a symptom known as "apnea," which is a pause in the child's breathing pattern.

Countywide, just over 91 percent of kindergartners have received all required doses of the vaccine. More than 93 percent of 7th graders have received a booster.

For additional information about pertussis, visit [the CDPH website](#), talk to your medical provider or phone the Public Health Branch Communicable Disease Program at 707-268-2182. To make an appointment for a vaccine, contact your healthcare provider or call the Public Health Clinic at 707-268-2108.

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