



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

news release

Sept. 25, 2019

Health officials urge pertussis vaccine as local cases rise

Local public health officials are stressing the importance of getting vaccinated for pertussis after a local infant who tested positive for the disease was hospitalized in an intensive care unit earlier this month.

Since July, nine county residents, including the infant, have been diagnosed with the highly contagious respiratory illness in seven separate incidents.

In early July, a Eureka teenager was diagnosed with pertussis, also known as whooping cough. Subsequently, one of the teenager's family members was also diagnosed. In an unrelated case, another teenager and family member were diagnosed later in the month. To date, an additional four unrelated people between the ages of 9 and 67 years old have been diagnosed with whooping cough in Humboldt County.

Pertussis typically begins with cold-like symptoms and sometimes a mild cough or fever before progressing to severe coughing fits which can include uncontrollable, violent coughing and can make it difficult to breathe, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Babies with pertussis may not cough, but may gag and gasp instead, as well as have a symptom known as "apnea," which is a pause in a child's breathing pattern.

Babies need three doses of the DTaP (Diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis) vaccine and cannot receive their first dose until 2 months old.

Public Health Supervising Communicable Disease Nurse Hava Phillips said, "Infants and young children are most at risk from serious complications related to pertussis. By getting vaccinated during pregnancy, mothers pass on antibodies which help protect infants from pertussis until they are old enough to be vaccinated."

During the 2014 outbreak in Humboldt County, there were more than 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.

According to the 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.

A booster shot is recommended for anyone over 11 years old who has not yet received one.

For additional information about pertussis, visit the [California Department of Public Health](#) website, talk to your medical provider or phone the Humboldt County Department of Health & Human Services Communicable Disease Program at 707-268-2182. To make an appointment for a vaccine, contact your health care provider or call the Public Health Clinic at 707-268-2108.

-# # #-

Follow us on Twitter: [@HumCoDHHS](#) and
Facebook: [facebook.com/humcodhhs](https://www.facebook.com/humcodhhs)