



County of Santa Cruz

HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

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COMMUNICABLE DISEASE UNIT

PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY UPDATE

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| To: | All Healthcare Providers in Santa Cruz County |
| From: | Arnold S. Leff, MD, REHS, County Public Health Officer |
| Subject: | Local Increase in Pertussis (Whooping Cough) Cases – <u>Suspect</u> and confirmed cases <u>reportable by law</u>. |
| Date: | November 21, 2018 |

Current Situation: The number of pertussis (whooping cough) cases continues to increase across Santa Cruz County. Since September 1st, the Public Health Division has received 66 reports of suspected or confirmed pertussis cases, with most cases associated with multiple school outbreaks. Public Health officials recommend that providers **be vigilant in evaluating individuals for pertussis, particularly those in close contact with infants and pregnant women** as whooping cough can progress to severe symptoms, including death, in infants less than one year old. **Be aware that early symptoms may resemble a common cold and that vaccinated individuals may present with milder symptoms.**

CASE RECOGNITION:

- **Consider pertussis** in individuals (**including those who have been vaccinated**) with cough illness and be aware that variable clinical presentations are possible with pertussis. Illness is often milder in vaccinated individuals. Young infants may not experience a noticeable cough or “whoop”.
- **Test for pertussis:** Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing by naso-pharyngeal swab or lavage is the preferred test method. Refer to California Department of Public Health’s (CDPH) “Pertussis Laboratory Testing Guidance” for additional diagnostic information. (Link at bottom.)
- **Start treatment immediately if pertussis is suspected;** do not wait for a lab confirmation. Negative results do not rule out pertussis. Prophylactic antibiotics are recommended in household contacts of a case, regardless of age or vaccination status, particularly in households with infants < 1 year of age who are most at risk for severe disease. **Recommended antibiotics are azithromycin or clarithromycin or erythromycin.**
- **Prevent further spread:** The most effective strategy to protect infants who are most at risk for severe disease is to vaccinate all pregnant women during each pregnancy, preferably between 27 and 36 weeks of gestation. It is also important to vaccinate all children with the DTaP series on time and give a Tdap dose to adolescents and adults. Case recognition and reporting, appropriate treatment, isolation, and educating patients about good respiratory etiquette are additional measures to prevent spread.

CASE REPORTING:

- **Report suspected and confirmed pertussis cases promptly** to the Communicable Disease Unit via CalREDIE or fax Confidential Morbidity Report forms (link at bottom) to 831-454-5049. Public Health relies on providers to report cases in a timely manner to support infection prevention and control measures.

This is an update to the 10/22/18 advisory. If you did not receive the previous advisory, please contact the Public Information Officer at Corinne.Hyland@santacruzcounty.us. For further questions please call the Communicable Disease Unit at (831) 454-4114.

Additional Information:

Confidential Morbidity Report (CMR): <http://www.santacruzhealth.org/CMRGeneral>

CDPH Pertussis Information, including lab testing: <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/pertussis.aspx>

American Academy of Pediatrics Red Book

Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.