

**County of Santa Clara**  
**Public Health Department**

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**Update #4: Pertussis (Whooping Cough)**

**DATE:** November 9, 2010

**TO:** Internal Medicine  
Pediatrics  
OB/GYN  
Urgent Care / Emergency Departments

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Health Officer

This fax contains 1 page.

Please copy and distribute to  
ALL physicians at your location.

Halloween, the World Series, and the 2010 Elections have all passed, but pertussis is still circulating widely in Santa Clara County and across the state. Although case counts are starting to decline, we are still seeing missed opportunities for diagnosis, treatment and prevention. Here are some helpful tips:

- 1) Think Pertussis** — Pertussis is still circulating. A missed diagnosis in an infant means treatment delays and increased risk of severe illness and death. A missed diagnosis in older-aged children, adolescents and adults means unchecked transmission to others, including infants. Think pertussis even in fully vaccinated patients – neither DTaP nor Tdap are 100% effective.
- 2) Test for Pertussis** — Respiratory virus season is just beginning, and the initial symptoms of pertussis – cold-like upper respiratory symptoms – are indistinguishable from many viral illnesses. See <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/Pertussis.aspx> “Information for Health Professionals” for details on the clinical presentation of pertussis by age group. Even if your clinical suspicion of pertussis is high (e.g. patient was exposed to pertussis and has a cough), it is important to document the diagnosis to guide treatment, to know if your patient is at risk of transmitting the infection to others, and to make decisions regarding return to school or work.
- 3) Treat for Pertussis** — In infants < 6 months, early treatment is critical and can help prevent fatal illness. In other age groups, early treatment can reduce the period of infectiousness and dampen transmission. Persons are considered infectious from the onset of cold symptoms until after 5 days of treatment or 21 days after cough onset.
- 4) Prevent Transmission** — You can help prevent transmission in our community. Persons with confirmed or suspected pertussis should not return to work or school until they are no longer infectious (see above). Report confirmed or suspect cases promptly to the Disease Prevention and Control Program by calling 408-885-4214 or by faxing a completed Confidential Morbidity Report (CMR) to 408-885-3709. For more information, visit our website at [www.sccphd.org](http://www.sccphd.org).