

County of Santa Clara

Public Health Department

Health Officer
976 Lenzen Avenue, 2nd Floor
San José, CA 95126



HEALTH ADVISORY: Pertussis (Whooping Cough) in Santa Clara County and California

DATE: August 8, 2014

TO: Physicians, Physician Assistants, Nurse Practitioners, Infection Control, Hospitals, and Clinics

FROM: Sara H. Cody, MD
Health Officer

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Communicable Disease Controller

As of August 2, a total of 349 pertussis cases have been reported to the Santa Clara County Public Health Department this year (representing a twofold increase in cases reported from the same time period last year); this includes four hospitalizations in infants younger than 6 months and one hospitalization in a toddler. The highest rates of pertussis in Santa Clara County are among infants younger than 6 months, followed by adolescents 10–17 years old. Infants too young to be fully immunized remain the age group at highest risk of hospitalization and death. California as a whole continues to experience a widespread pertussis epidemic, with 6,930 cases reported so far this year (as of August 4), including 199 hospitalizations and one infant death.

Clinicians should:

- Vaccinate**
 - Pregnant women in their third trimester **with each pregnancy**.
 - Household members and caregivers of a newborn (ensure Tdap is up to date).
 - All infants, children, and adults according to the regular vaccine schedule.
- Suspect pertussis**
 - Pertussis can begin with rhinorrhea, low-grade fever, and mild cough and therefore can be initially misdiagnosed as a mild URI, bronchitis, or asthma.
 - In infants, pertussis can manifest as apnea, hypoxia, seizures, or respiratory distress.
 - A high WBC with a predominance of lymphocytes is a strong indication of pertussis.
 - Fully vaccinated individuals may still contract pertussis, as vaccine immunity wanes rapidly.
- Test and treat**
 - Obtain a nasal aspirate or NP swab and send for PCR and/or culture. Specimens may also be sent to the Santa Clara County Public Health Lab (call 408-885-4272 for more information).
 - Start empiric antibiotic treatment prior to receiving lab results if you suspect pertussis.
 - Ensure completion of a full five-day course of antibiotics (preferably azithromycin) before allowing patient to return to school, daycare, or work.
 - Provide antibiotic prophylaxis to household contacts, caregivers, and other persons who have had direct contact with respiratory secretions and aerosols from a symptomatic case, especially when there is an infant or pregnant woman in the home. Dosage and duration for antibiotic prophylaxis is the same as treatment. See <http://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/outbreaks/PEP.html>
- Report suspected cases** to SCCPHD within one day by phone **408-885-4214** (press 1, then 3) or by faxed CMR (<http://www.sccgov.org/sites/sccphd/en-us/FindForms/Pages/DRForms.aspx>)

For more information about pertussis clinical presentation, testing, vaccination, and prevention of transmission, visit the CA Department of Public Health at <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/Pertussis.aspx>, the CDC at <http://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/clinical>, or call the SCC Public Health Department at **408-885-4214**.

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.