

County of Santa Clara

Public Health Department

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



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

DATE: December 8, 2016

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

During the period October 1 – December 6, a total of 44 pertussis cases (of which 17 are laboratory confirmed) have been reported to the Santa Clara County Public Health Department. The vast majority of cases are part of outbreaks among vaccinated middle and high school students. Immunity from acellular pertussis vaccines wanes rapidly, leading to cyclical increases in pertussis cases every few years. This health advisory serves as notice of increased pertussis in our community and a request to consider pertussis on your differential diagnosis.

Clinicians should:

1. **Suspect pertussis**
 - Pertussis can begin with rhinorrhea, low-grade fever (often absent), and mild cough. This catarrhal stage can be difficult to distinguish from 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.
2. **Test and treat**
 - Obtain a nasal aspirate or nasopharyngeal (NP) swab and send for PCR and/or culture. See www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/immunize/documents/pertussislaboratorytesting.pdf
 - Begin antibiotic treatment prior to receiving lab results if you suspect pertussis based on clinical picture or history of close contact with a pertussis case.
 - 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 others with direct contact with respiratory secretions and aerosols from a symptomatic case, especially when there is an infant or pregnant woman in the home.
 - See www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Documents/CDPH_Pertussis_Quicksheet.pdf
3. **Report suspected cases** within one day by phone **408-885-4214** (press 1, then 3) or by faxed CMR (www.sccgov.org/sites/sccphd/en-us/FindForms/Pages/DRForms.aspx)
4. **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.

For more information about clinical presentation, testing, vaccination, and prevention of transmission, visit the California Department of Public Health at www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/Pertussis.aspx, the CDC at www.cdc.gov/pertussis/clinical, or call the Santa Clara County 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.