



NEWS RELEASE

Public Health

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CONTACT:

Lana Cao
Public Health Information Officer
(909) 387-9147
Lana.Cao@dph.sbcounty.gov



First infant death from Pertussis (whooping cough) confirmed

Pertussis, also known as whooping cough, has claimed the life of a San Bernardino County infant less than six months of age. This is the first confirmed death from the disease in California since 2016.

"This infant's death is a tragedy for the family and our community. My sincerest condolences are extended to the family at this difficult time," said San Bernardino County Health Officer Dr. Maxwell Ohikhuare.

Whooping cough outbreaks tend to occur every three to five years. California experienced a whooping cough epidemic in 2014 when more than 11,000 cases were reported. The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) reported 1,943 cases of whooping cough in 2016 and 3,156 cases in 2017. With a steady increase statewide, the next outbreak is expected this year or in 2019. As of July 17, 2018, San Bernardino County has reported 20 cases of whooping cough, and a total of 186 cases since the 2014 epidemic.

Young infants are at greatest risk of hospitalization and death from whooping cough. Therefore, pregnant women are encouraged to receive the whooping cough vaccine (Tdap) at the earliest opportunity between 27 and 36 weeks gestation of every pregnancy. Whooping cough antibodies transferred from vaccinated mothers to their infants help protect babies until they are old enough to be vaccinated. The first whooping cough vaccine series (DTaP) is essential for reducing disease in young infants and should not be delayed. DTaP can be given to infants as early as 6 weeks of age. Even one dose of DTaP may offer some protection against the disease and death in infants. It is important that infants, children, and adults are up-to-date on their immunizations.

To prevent the spread of whooping cough, CDPH recommends:

- For optimal protection for infants, vaccinate pregnant women at **every pregnancy between 27-36 weeks.**
- Vaccinate infants as soon as possible. The first dose is recommended at two months of age. Young children need five doses of DTaP vaccine by Kindergarten (ages 4-6).
- Vaccinate all entering 7th grade students.
- Vaccinate adults who may have contact with infants and/or healthcare workers who may have contact with infants and/or pregnant women.

The symptoms of whooping cough vary by age. For children, a typical case starts with a cough and runny nose for one to two weeks. The cough then worsens and children may have rapid coughing spells that end with a whooping sound. In some cases, coughing episodes may cause the infant's face to turn red or purple in color. Young infants may not have typical whooping cough symptoms and may have no apparent cough. For adults, whooping cough may simply be a cough illness that last for several weeks.

For more information on whooping cough, visit the [San Bernardino County Department of Public Health, Communicable Disease Section](#) or call 1-800-722-4794.