



County of San Luis Obispo • Public Health Department

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Pertussis (Whooping Cough) Update – Cases Increasing

As the number of pertussis cases in San Luis Obispo continues to rise, the California Department of Public Health along with local Health Officials emphasize that the key to controlling Whooping Cough is vaccination. As of July 21, the County's Public Health Department has received reports of 258 confirmed, probable and suspect cases. **According to the California Department of Public Health, this puts our county in the top two for numbers of pertussis cases. Only Marin County has reported more cases.**

Of our counties 258 cases, two infants have been hospitalized. "Pertussis is highly contagious and can be fatal for young infants," reports Health Officer Dr. Penny Borenstein. "The symptoms are typically not as severe in adults, so it often goes untreated and is easily passed to infants who are not fully immunized until they are six months old." She continues, "Most adults who were immunized as children no longer have that immunity as the shots we receive as children wear off by the time one finishes middle school."

Symptoms of pertussis include a cough lasting longer than two weeks, increasing in severity and episodes of sudden, severe coughing and vomiting after coughing. Infants who are ill may become pale or dusky blue during a coughing episode and may stop breathing for a short period of time. Possible complications include pneumonia, seizures, sepsis and encephalopathy. Treatment includes antibiotics and rest for most – for infants, hospitalization can be necessary.

Last week, the State of California released new recommendations for pertussis immunization due to the recent outbreak. In addition to the typical series of childhood pertussis immunizations, CDPH now recommends an adolescent-adult pertussis booster vaccine (Tdap) for:

- anyone 7 years and older who is not fully immunized, including persons aged 65 and older,
- women of childbearing age, before, during, or immediately after pregnancy, and
- other people who have contact with pregnant women or infants.

To prevent further cases locally, San Luis Obispo County Public Health is making vaccine available to anyone in the above groups at its three locations in Paso Robles, Grover Beach and San Luis Obispo by appointment. Please call your local clinic site to make an appointment.

For more information about pertussis and local updates, please go to: <http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/PA.htm> and click on "pertussis (whooping cough)" or call our Public Health Information Line at 805-788-2903.

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