



COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO HEALTH AGENCY
PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Whooping Cough Vaccine Recommended for Pregnant Women, Close Contacts of Newborns
Third-Trimester Vaccine Provides Protection for Babies; Caregiver Vaccines Continue Protection**

San Luis Obispo — The County of San Luis Obispo Public Health Department is urging all pregnant women to get immunized against whooping cough (also known as pertussis) at the earliest opportunity, between 27-36 weeks gestation with **each** pregnancy. The Department is also urging those who will be in close contact with a newborn to get the vaccine, called Tdap, to create a "circle of protection" around the baby.

"It's crucial that every pregnant woman get immunized as early as possible in her third trimester," said Dr. Penny Borenstein, Health Officer of the County of San Luis Obispo. "By getting the whooping cough vaccine during pregnancy, women are passing on protective antibodies needed to greatly lower their babies' risk of developing pertussis in early life. When caregivers and close family also get the vaccine, they are creating a circle of protection to help keep the baby safe."

This recommendation follows the release of data by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) showing high rates of whooping cough among infants: in 2015, the most recent year for which confirmed data is available, 326 whooping cough cases among infants less than four months of age were reported in California. In the same year, just 49 percent of pregnant women statewide report getting the Tdap vaccine. Low rates of Tdap immunization among pregnant women can contribute to high rates of whooping cough among infants.

Whooping cough is a highly contagious disease that is most serious for babies. When babies catch whooping cough, they can get very sick and have trouble breathing. Newborn babies are especially vulnerable until they can receive their first DTaP (the formulation for children two months through six years of age) vaccine at two months. Until then, they rely on protection from the vaccine their mother can get during the third trimester of pregnancy, and on the circle of protection created when family and caregivers get the Tdap vaccine. Studies have shown that as many as nine out of 10 babies will be protected against whooping cough if their mothers get a whooping cough vaccine while pregnant. Even if babies get whooping cough, the transferred antibodies can help protect them from dangerous complications and hospitalization.

The County of San Luis Obispo Public Health Department urges pregnant women to contact their prenatal care providers about getting the Tdap vaccine. Family members, caregivers and

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others who come in close contact with newborn babies are urged to contact their health care provider about getting the vaccine.

Search for nearby locations that offer immunizations at VaccineFinder.org.

More information about whooping cough is available at <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/Pertussis.aspx>

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