

October 2010

Whooping Cough (pertussis) Epidemic and Getting Tdap Vaccine Protection

Dear Parents and Guardians:

With school back in session, many families are busy juggling new schedules. But did you know there's a whooping cough (pertussis) epidemic in California? Whooping cough can cause a violent cough at any age and can kill young babies.

Protect yourself against whooping cough with immunization, and **seek medical care right away if you or anyone in your family might have whooping cough**. Whooping cough starts out like a common cold, and is often followed within days by severe coughing spells. Young babies may not cough and disease may be milder in older children and adults. The disease can spread easily at school or home.

You and your child may have received the initial series of immunizations to protect against pertussis. However, this protection wears off over time. A booster shot (called Tdap) is recommended for all children and adults 10 years of age and older to help prevent getting whooping cough. It's especially important if there is a new baby at home now or coming soon, and for everyone who may come in contact with a baby. **Talk with your doctor about getting immunized!**

Also, be sure to get flu vaccine for you and your child every year! Flu vaccine is available in many places and protection lasts throughout the flu season!

Whooping cough and flu vaccines are safe and effective. The most common side effect is soreness at the injection site.

If you don't have health insurance, ask your local health department about the Vaccines for Children Program. This program provides free vaccines to children 18 years of age and younger.

**A message from your school nurse, the California School Nurses Organization,
the California Department of Public Health and
the County of San Diego HHS Immunization Program
Web: www.sdiz.org (click on the "New Pertussis Information" button)**



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