



**COUNTY OF ORANGE
HEALTH CARE AGENCY**

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**PUBLIC HEALTH
EPIDEMIOLOGY & ASSESSMENT**

June 13, 2014

Pertussis in Orange County

Orange County Public Health has received increasing reports of pertussis (also known as whooping cough) in our community over the last several weeks. Because pertussis frequently causes illness in schoolchildren, we are working with Orange County schools to provide parents with information about this illness.

Pertussis is a very contagious infection caused by the *Bordetella pertussis* bacteria and spread through the air by coughing. Pertussis usually begins with cold-like symptoms and a cough that worsens over 1-2 weeks. Symptoms may include coughing fits, and these fits may be followed by a “whooping” noise as persons with pertussis need to catch their breath. People with pertussis usually do not have a fever, and feel well aside from the cough. The cough usually lasts from 1 to 6 weeks, but can go on for up to 10 weeks or more. Infants and young children are usually vaccinated against pertussis, but the vaccine becomes less effective as children get older, and vaccinated children can become infected.

Infants suffer the most severe illness from pertussis. They are at highest risk for developing complications from the disease including pneumonia, seizures, and death. Older children and adults with pertussis may have only a persistent cough. But while older children and adults may experience milder illness, they are still contagious and the most common source of exposure for infants. People who are already ill can take antibiotics to reduce the risk of spreading pertussis.

Orange County Public Health Recommendations:

- **The best way to protect families and young infants from pertussis is to make sure that everyone in the household is up to date on pertussis vaccination.** Children should receive 5 doses of pertussis vaccine (DTaP) by school entry. Children must have a dose of Tdap prior to entering seventh grade. The Tdap vaccine is required for all students in grades 7 through 12.
- Pregnant women should receive a dose of Tdap with each pregnancy to protect themselves and their infant.
- Students or staff with a persistent cough should be seen by a provider and evaluated for pertussis.
- For additional information about pertussis, talk with your medical provider or visit www.cdc.gov/pertussis or ohealthinfo.com/phs/about/dcepi/epi/disease/pertussis/info.

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