



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Southern Nevada Health District is investigating several pertussis cases

Pertussis is a vaccine-preventable illness

LAS VEGAS - The Southern Nevada Health District is currently investigating three cases of pertussis (whooping cough) among infants and school-age children. There are currently 18 cases of pertussis in Northern Nevada.

Pertussis (whooping cough) is a very contagious, bacterial respiratory disease. Although it might be a mild disease in older children and adults, in younger children it can result in hospitalization due to complications including severe respiratory distress and inflammation of the brain. In very rare cases, pertussis can cause death, especially in children less than one year of age.

Pertussis can be prevented through vaccination. Children attending school in Clark County must be immunized against pertussis, however, the vaccine wears off after five years. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as well as the health district recommend a new booster vaccine, called Tdap, for children who are 11 to 12 years old. Older children and adults may also get Tdap, which is approved for individuals between the ages of 10 and 64. It is especially important for adults who live with or care for infants to receive a Tdap vaccine. Adults should receive the Tdap vaccine instead of their next tetanus shot. The vaccine prevents the illness in 70 percent to 90 percent of those who receive it. Because immunity begins to wane approximately five years after the last dose of vaccine, adolescents and adults are left with little or no protection against the disease.

“This is a perfect opportunity to remind everyone of the importance of immunizations in our community. Pertussis is a vaccine-preventable illness and people throughout the community should get booster shots to protect themselves and their families. Adults and older children frequently are the source of pertussis for young children. Vaccination protects the individual as well as their families,” said Dr. Lawrence Sands, the health district’s chief health officer.

The Southern Nevada Health District offers Tdap vaccine as part of its immunization program. Immunizations are available Monday - Friday between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. at the district’s public health centers. Special Saturday back-to-school immunization clinics will be held at the health district’s Shadow Lane location between 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 4, 11, 18 and 25. The health district charges an administrative fee of \$16 per child for one shot or \$20 per child for two or more shots. Some vaccines may require an additional fee.

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Health District investigating pertussis – add one

Symptoms of pertussis usually occur in stages, with the initial stage appearing like a cold with a runny nose, sneezing, low-grade fever and a cough, which lasts one to two weeks before it worsens. The second stage of the disease includes uncontrolled coughing spells followed by the “whooping” sound a person makes when he breathes in. During these severe coughing spells, vomiting may occur, or the person’s lips or face might look blue due to a lack of oxygen. The second stage can last four to six weeks.

Children and adults who are partially protected by the vaccine might become infected, but may have a milder illness than infants and very young children. Individuals infected with a mild case might not experience any symptoms or have only mild cough, however, they can still transmit the disease to others, including infants too young to be immunized. Infants younger than six months might have a cough that does not include the “whooping” sound. Prompt use of antibiotics in a household is helpful in limiting other cases.

The disease can occur at any age, but it is most commonly reported in children during the first year of life. Infants and young children usually get the disease from an older sibling or from an adult who has a mild case of the illness. The bacteria are spread in the air by droplets produced during coughing or sneezing. Once a person is exposed, it takes seven to 10 days before the first symptoms appear.

For more information about pertussis, please contact the Southern Nevada Health District’s Office of Epidemiology at (702) 759-1300; for information about the health district’s immunization program, call (702) 759-0850 or visit www.southernnevadahealthdistrict.org.