



Health and Human Services Agency

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Dear School Administrators and Staff:

The whooping cough (pertussis) epidemic and infant deaths is cause for concern, and we want to help you protect your students.

California is on pace to have more whooping cough cases in 2010 than in any year since 1958. This disease causes people to cough so violently that it is hard to breathe. It is especially worrisome because it's quite contagious when direct contact with respiratory, oral or nasal secretions from a person with pertussis to the mouth or nose of someone unvaccinated and exposed to pertussis (e.g. kissing, sharing utensils, cough or sneeze in face). Children who have been diagnosed with whooping cough **must stay home** from school until they have been taking appropriate antibiotics for five consecutive days.

Even if you have had whooping cough (or the shots), you are not immune for your lifetime as the pertussis vaccine's protection lasts 5 – 10 years. School staff and parents are advised to have a booster called Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis) if they haven't had one in the last two years. This will help protect the adult and those most vulnerable around them, especially infants. If you need vaccine, ask your doctor, visit your local pharmacy (including those in supermarkets), or visit a Shasta County Public Health clinic.

Please remind your students to wash their hands frequently and cover their mouth and nose when they cough or sneeze. As part of routine janitorial cleaning, be diligent about cleaning frequently touched surfaces in your classrooms thoroughly each day such as door knobs, water faucet handles, keyboards and switches.

If you have questions about this or other health and wellness issues, please visit www.shastahhsa.net. We thank you for helping to keep our community healthy, and we wish you a successful school year.

Sincerely,

Andrew Deckert, MD, MPH, Health Officer
Shasta County Public Health

Symptoms of whooping cough:

- Starts with a cough and runny nose for one to two weeks
- Weeks to months of severe coughing fits that end with a whooping sound when the person tries to catch his or her breath
- Person may vomit or become blue in the face with the cough
- Very young infants may not have much cough, but have trouble with breathing and feeding and have a high risk to end up in the hospital

“Healthy people in thriving and safe communities”

www.shastahhsa.net