



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

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CHULA VISTA STUDENT HAS WHOOPING COUGH

Vaccine Loses Effectiveness After Several Years; Tdap Vaccine Recommended

The San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) is working closely with Eagles Peak Charter School in Chula Vista, after a student was diagnosed with pertussis (whooping cough), a highly contagious disease that causes severe coughing.

The student has been out of school since Feb. 14. Other students, faculty and staff may have been exposed during the following time frame: Feb. 4 – Feb. 7, Feb. 11 or Feb. 14.

“Immunization protection wears off after 5 -10 years, increasing the number of susceptible persons. Parents are encouraged to watch for cough symptoms and to contact their physician if they or their children develop a persistent cough within the next one or two weeks,” said Wilma Wooten, M.D., M.P.H., County Public Health Officer. “It’s important for parents to ensure their children are protected against vaccine-preventable diseases. We urge parents to ask their physicians about the Tdap vaccine, for children 10 years of age and older. It is recommended that adolescents and adults also get the vaccine.

“Whooping cough is a concern because it can be passed to infants, who are at highest risk of complications, by their adult and adolescent household contacts,” Dr. Wooten added.

School officials have notified parents about the student’s illness, and provided recommendations on what to do if parents have concerns or questions.

Named for the "whoop" sound children and adults sometimes make when they try to breathe in during or after a severe coughing spell, whooping cough usually starts with flu-like symptoms, such as runny nose, sneezing, fever, and a mild cough. Symptoms can last up to two weeks and may be followed by severe coughing fits associated with vomiting. Fever, if present, is usually mild. It is treatable with antibiotics.

Whooping cough can occur at any age, but infants and young children are at highest risk of life-threatening complications, the most common of which is pneumonia. In adolescents and adults, rib fractures and difficulty sleeping may occur. Anyone who is not immunized is at a higher risk for severe whooping cough.

For more information about whooping cough, please call the HHSA Immunization Branch at (619) 692-8661, or visit the website at www.sdiz.org.

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