



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

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## **LA COSTA HEIGHTS ELEMENTARY STUDENT DIAGNOSED WITH WHOOPING COUGH** *Case Highlights Need for DTaP Booster Shots*

The County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) has confirmed that an 11-year-old student at La Costa Heights Elementary School has whooping cough (pertussis), a highly contagious disease that causes severe coughing. The student was immunized but had not had the recommended booster shot.

“Teenagers and adults should have the Tdap booster, which can prevent whooping cough, diphtheria and tetanus, as immunity to whooping cough can diminish over time,” said Wilma Wooten, M.D., M.P.H., County Public Health Officer. “It’s extremely important for parents to ensure that they and their children are protected against vaccine preventable diseases including whooping cough.”

La Costa Heights Elementary School has notified parents through letters and e-mails about potential exposure. The possible exposure occurred during the week of April 13<sup>th</sup>. School and health officials have implemented a cough watch on the student’s classmates for any sign of more cases.

Named for the "whoop" sound victims may make 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 and vomiting. Whooping cough can occur at any age, but infants and young children are at highest risk of life threatening complications, such as pneumonia, brain damage, and death. Individuals with symptoms of whooping cough should call their health care provider.

The incubation period is commonly 7–10 days, with a range of 4–21 days. It is recommended that children get five doses of DTaP vaccine, one dose at 2 mo., 4 mo., 6 mo., 15-18 mo., and 4-6 years of age. It is also recommended that people 11- 64 years of age receive a one-time dose of Tdap, given in place of a “tetanus booster” (Td), which is administered every 10 years.

In 2008, there were 51 cases of whooping cough reported in the county. There have been 11 cases to date this year, including this case. For more information about whooping cough, please call the HHSA Immunization Branch at (619) 692-8661, or visit the Web site at [www.sdiz.org](http://www.sdiz.org).

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