



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

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WHOOPING COUGH DIAGNOSED IN TIERRASANTA CHILD *Individuals with Severe Coughing Spells Should Consult a Doctor*

A 10-year-old Tierrasanta child has been diagnosed with pertussis, commonly known as whooping cough. The child, a student at Kumeyaay Elementary School in San Diego, was also involved in a Christian Youth Theater (CYT) Group production in May.

“Whooping cough is very active this season and is highly contagious,” said Dr. Wilma Wooten, M.D., M.P.H, San Diego County Public Health Officer. “If children are having severe coughing spells, especially after having flu-like symptoms, parents should ask their primary care physician to test their children for whooping cough.”

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. These symptoms may be mild and brief, or last up to two weeks, but are often followed by severe coughing fits that may be 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.

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,” which is administered every 10 years.

The San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) is working with officials from both the school district and the theater group. Notification letters have been sent to the parents of those who may have interacted with the ill student or people that may have come into contact with the child at the theater production. The last day of school at Kumeyaay Elementary was June 15. The CYT program ended on May 23 for the theater and June 4 for classes.

In 2008, there were 51 cases of whooping cough reported in the county. There have been 42 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.

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