



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

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MISSION MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT DIAGNOSED WITH WHOOPING COUGH

A 14-year-old student who attends Mission Middle School in the Escondido Union School District, has been diagnosed with pertussis, commonly known as whooping cough. The student had previously received 5 DTap shots, but had not had the recommended Tdap 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. “No vaccine is 100 percent effective, but they lessen the severity of symptoms if you do become ill.”

The San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency is working closely with school staff to notify the parents of all students who attend the school.

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. No vaccine provides 100 percent protection against infections, but if a person does get the disease after being vaccinated it is often less severe.

There have been 104 cases of whooping cough in San Diego County this year. In 2008, there were 51.

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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