

Date: June 6, 2007

Pertussis Case at a North County School

A 10th grade student at San Pasqual High School in Escondido has been diagnosed with pertussis, a contagious respiratory tract infection causing severe coughing. The student has been out of school since May 18. Other students, faculty and staff may have been exposed during the first two weeks of May, and possibly the end of April. Parents have been notified by the school, provided information about the illness, and encouraged to seek healthcare if their child develops symptoms compatible with pertussis.

A clinical case of pertussis is defined as an acute cough illness lasting at least 2 weeks with either paroxysms of coughing, inspiratory “whoop,” or posttussive vomiting without other apparent cause. In older children and adults, symptoms may simply be an aggravating cough that lasts for several weeks. Because vaccine immunity wanes after 5-6 years, adolescents and adults are equally susceptible to acquiring infection and being infectious to others, including unimmunized or partially immunized infants. Up to 90% of susceptible household contacts may develop clinical disease following exposure to an index case.

Pertussis is endemic in the San Diego area and continued surveillance is important. Clinicians are encouraged to submit nasopharyngeal swabs for culture or PCR testing when patients present with symptoms suggestive of pertussis. Positive results are more likely to be obtained during the early stages of illness. Early identification and prompt reporting of suspect cases to the County Immunization Branch at 619-692-8661 or Community Epidemiology Branch at 619-515-6620 will facilitate timely prophylaxis of close contacts to prevent the spread of pertussis in the community.

For more information about pertussis, please contact County Immunization Branch at (619) 692-8661, or visit the website at www.sdiz.org.

Thank you for your continued participation.

Emergency Medical Alert Network (EMAN)

County of San Diego, Health & Human Services Agency
Community Epidemiology Branch