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NEW MEXICO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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Pertussis Cases Continue to Rise in Bernalillo County

New Mexico Department of Health Encourages Awareness to Identify Illness

(Santa Fe) – The New Mexico Department of Health announced today that pertussis cases in Bernalillo County continue to increase. Since the beginning of 2011, the Department of Health has identified 118 confirmed and probable cases of pertussis and an additional 27 suspect cases statewide. In Bernalillo County there are 81 confirmed and probable cases and another 16 suspect cases.

Pertussis is a serious bacterial respiratory infection that is highly contagious. It is also known as whooping cough due to the distinctive “whoop” sound that some people make after a fit of coughing. Infants younger than one year of age are at most risk of severe disease and complications. In order to limit the spread of disease and protect infants, everyone should make certain that they are up to date with pertussis vaccinations. Anyone with unexplained cough illness should seek medical evaluation.

“We continue to see more cases in Bernalillo County than expected and are continuing to investigate cases in school and non-school settings,” said Department of Health Cabinet Secretary, Dr. Catherine Torres. “We encourage adolescents and adults to get the booster vaccine so they don’t get sick and pass the disease to others, particularly young infants who are the most vulnerable to serious complications.”

Confirmed cases have been identified in the following schools: A Child’s Garden; APS Family School; Atrisco Heritage Academy High School; Barcelona Elementary; Central New Mexico Community College; Eastern Hills Christian Academy; Harrison Middle School; LBJ Middle School; McCollum Elementary School; Montessori of the Rio Grande Charter School; Osuna Elementary School; Rio Grande Christian Academy; St. Luke’s Presbyterian Preschool. Since October 1, 2011, 2 infants have been hospitalized. There have been no deaths.

Babies need a series of three doses of pertussis vaccine plus a fourth booster dose to be fully protected by 15 to 18 months of age. Seventh-grade students also need a booster dose of the pertussis vaccine and a booster vaccine is also available for adults. Anyone caring for infants



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should protect themselves and the infants with whom they will come into contact with by receiving a booster vaccine.

Vaccines are free for any child in New Mexico, regardless of insurance status, under the Vaccines for Children program. Most commercial insurances will cover necessary adult vaccinations. Adults are encouraged to contact their healthcare provider or pharmacy plan for more information on receiving the vaccine for pertussis protection. Families with insurance should contact their child's healthcare provider for children's vaccine. Children who have no insurance coverage can get vaccine at their local public health office.

“The Department of Health investigates all identified confirmed, probable and suspect cases of pertussis and provides recommendations for prevention to household and other close contacts,” Dr. Torres said.

To control the spread of pertussis, the Department of Health recommends the following:

- Vaccinate all children younger than 7 years of age with the complete series
- Vaccinate adolescents 11 to 18 and adults 19 to 64 years of age with Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis)
- Adults aged 65 and older can be vaccinated with Tdap, particularly those who have or anticipate having close contact with an infant less than 12 months of age
- Pregnant women who have not previously received Tdap should receive Tdap, preferably during the third or late second trimester (after 20 weeks gestation) or immediately postpartum
- Anyone who will be in contact with infants less than one year of age
- Healthcare workers
- Anyone with an unexplained cough illness lasting two weeks or longer and/or anyone who has unexplained coughing spasms, vomiting after coughing, and infants with periods of no breathing or turning blue should be evaluated for pertussis
- Anyone diagnosed with pertussis should receive appropriate antibiotics to prevent further spread of the disease
- Anyone starting antibiotics to treat pertussis should stay home and avoid contact with all persons outside of the household for the first five days of antibiotics

For more information go online to www.nmhealth.org.

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