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NEW MEXICO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
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## **Pertussis Cases Rise in Bernalillo County**

*New Mexico Department of Health Encourages Pertussis Vaccination*

(Santa Fe) – The New Mexico Department of Health (DOH) is announcing today that New Mexico is seeing a significant increase in the number of pertussis cases in Bernalillo County, and people can protect themselves and their families by getting vaccinated. 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.

“Already this year, we have identified twice as many cases than the most recent five year average for Bernalillo County,” said DOH Cabinet Secretary, Dr. Catherine Torres. “We are investigating a number of cases in Bernalillo County, including those cases in a number of pre-school and school settings. 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.”

To date, DOH has identified 144 cases of pertussis statewide, 87 of which have been in Bernalillo County. Investigations of pertussis have taken place in the following Bernalillo County preschool and schools: A Child’s Garden; Atrisco Heritage Academy High School; Barcelona Elementary; Eastern Hills Christian Academy; Harrison Middle School; Rio Grande Christian Academy. Other cases are being investigated in Bernalillo County that are not associated with schools.

Babies need a vaccination 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 should protect themselves and the infants with whom they will come into contact with by receiving the 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.



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“Pertussis is a common disease, and we have periodic epidemics every three to five years as well as frequent outbreaks in both the United States and New Mexico,” said Dr.Torres. “We want people to be aware that the number of cases has increased recently, and they should make sure that family members of all ages are fully vaccinated so they don’t get this serious disease.”

To control the spread of pertussis, DOH 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).
- Anyone with a cough illness lasting two weeks or longer and/or anyone who has unexplained coughing spasms should be evaluated for pertussis.
- Anyone diagnosed with pertussis and their household and other close contacts should receive 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 five days after starting appropriate antibiotics.

Given the late nature of part of today’s investigation, two of the APS schools were unable to notify parents this afternoon.

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