



## Health Advisory

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### **Pertussis Activity is Increasing in Madera County**

The Madera County Department of Public Health (MCDPH) has received reports of several cases of pertussis (whooping cough) within the last three weeks. Infants and pregnant women are most vulnerable and have a higher rate of complications due to pertussis. Identification of pertussis cases is important, as post-exposure prophylaxis for close contacts may prevent the spread of disease to vulnerable persons such as infants. Up to date vaccination for all persons can prevent severe disease and spread of illness.

#### Actions Requested of Clinicians:

- Assess immunization status of children, pregnant individuals, and adults at every office visit.
  - All pregnant persons should receive the Tdap vaccine (whooping cough booster) in their third trimester of every pregnancy (between 27-36 weeks).
  - Infants can start the DTaP vaccine series as early as 6 weeks of age. Even one dose may offer some protection against fatal whooping cough disease in infants.
  - All non-pregnant adults >19 y.o. should have a Tdap booster one time.
- Consider testing for pertussis for respiratory illness presenting with pronounced coughing, especially if other causes (such as influenza and COVID-19) have been ruled out.
  - The symptoms below are typical for pertussis, especially if present for over 2 weeks:
    - Paroxysms of coughing
    - Inspiratory “whoop”
    - Post-tussive vomiting.
    - Apnea (with or without cyanosis)
- Pertussis Testing:

**PCR testing for pertussis is recommended to assess acute illness. Serology testing for pertussis is non-diagnostic and thus NOT recommended.**

Best practices for PCR testing:

- Collect nasopharyngeal (NP) specimen using polyester rayon, or nylon-flocked swabs.
  - Only test patients with signs and symptoms during the first 3 weeks of cough onset.
  - Do not test patients who have had 5 or more days of antibiotics.
- Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP):

Contacts at the highest risk of developing severe disease or for transmitting pertussis to high-risk persons, should be prioritized for postexposure prophylaxis (PEP). High-risk contacts include:

- Infants <1 year of age, particularly infants <4 months of age who have not yet received any doses of DTaP.
- Pregnant persons in their third trimester.
- Caregivers and household contacts of infants.
- All those attending or working in a childcare setting.

Household members of high-risk persons (such as infants) should receive PEP even if they are up to date for pertussis vaccination.

The recommended antimicrobial agents for treatment or PEP of pertussis are Azithromycin, Clarithromycin, or Erythromycin.

The MCDPH can assist in contact investigation and determining if PEP is indicated.

- Call MCDPH Communicable Disease Program at 559-675-7894 if you have any questions related to pertussis. Complete a Confidential Morbidity Report (CMR) and fax to 559-674-7262 to report all known or suspected cases of pertussis.
- Additional Resources:
    - [Pertussis Quicksheet \(ca.gov\)](#)
    - [Pertussis and Postexposure Antimicrobial Prophylaxis \(PEP\) | CDC](#)
    - [Pertussis Laboratory Testing \(ca.gov\)](#)
    - [Whooping Cough Vaccination | Pertussis | CDC](#)

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Categories of Health Alert Messages:

**Health Alert:** Conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention

**Health Advisory:** Provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action

**Health Update:** Provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action

**Health Information:** Provides general health information which is not considered to be of emergent nature

