



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE PUBLICATION

June 9, 2009

CONTACT: Tom Christensen (619) 515-6535

ESCONDIDO STUDENT HAS WHOOPING COUGH *Notification Letters Sent to Parents*

A 5-year-old kindergarten student at Pioneer Elementary School in Escondido has been diagnosed with pertussis, commonly referred to as whooping cough, a highly contagious disease that causes severe coughing. The student was fully immunized and has completed treatment.

The San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency (HHS) is working closely with school officials and notification letters have been sent to the parents of all 114 kindergarten students.

"Parents of kindergarten students are encouraged to watch for cough symptoms and to contact their physician if they or their children develop a persistent cough within the next two weeks," said Wilma Wooten, M.D., M.P.H., County Public Health Officer. "No vaccine provides 100 per cent protection against infections, but if a person does get the disease after being vaccinated it is often less severe.

"This is a good reminder for parents to make sure their children are immunized. It's important to ensure children are protected against vaccine-preventable diseases."

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. Symptoms can last up to two weeks and may be followed by severe coughing fits 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" (Td), which is administered every 10 years.

In 2008, there were 51 cases of whooping cough reported in the county. There have been 27 cases to date this year, including this case. For more information about whooping cough, please call the HHS Immunization Branch at (619) 692-8661, or visit the web site at www.sdiz.org.

###