



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE PUBLICATION

June 12, 2009

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OCEANSIDE STUDENT DIAGNOSED WITH WHOOPING COUGH *Disease is Highly Contagious, Starts with Flu-like Symptoms*

An 11-year-old student of Jefferson Middle School in Oceanside has been diagnosed with pertussis, commonly known as whooping cough. The student had been vaccinated.

The San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) is working closely with Jefferson Middle School officials and notification letters have been sent to the parents of all students who may have come into contact with the student.

“We continue to see cases of whooping cough in our community, and it’s a good reminder for parents to have their children’s immunizations up to date,” said Dean Sidelinger, M.D., M.S.Ed., County Deputy Public Health Officer. “While it is true that no vaccine provides 100 percent protection against infections, being immunized often makes the symptoms less severe if a person does become ill.”

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. These symptoms may be mild and brief, or last up to two weeks, but are often followed by severe coughing fits that may be 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,” which is administered every 10 years.

In 2008, there were 51 cases of whooping cough reported in the county. There have been 32 cases to date this year, including this case. For more information about whooping cough, please call the HHSA Immunization Branch at (619) 692-8661, or visit the web site at www.sdiz.org.

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