



News Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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CDPH Says No Whooping Cough Deaths in California During 2011
First Time in 20 Years Thanks to Statewide Vaccination Efforts

SACRAMENTO – California recorded no deaths from pertussis (whooping cough) during 2011, a first since 1991, announced Dr. Ron Chapman, director of the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the state public health officer.

“Greater awareness of the disease, more rapid diagnosis and treatment, and increased vaccination rates contributed to saving the lives of infants,” said Chapman. “I thank our public health and medical communities for working together and being especially vigilant following the 2010 epidemic.”

In 2010, 9,000 Californians were diagnosed with pertussis and ten infants died from the disease. In response, CDPH partnered with local health departments and health care providers across the state implementing disease control strategies and informational alerts. The state also offered free vaccines to hospitals, allowing convenient vaccination for new parents to prevent transmission of the disease to newborns. Last fall, a new state law required students in 7th -12th grades for the first time to get a Tdap booster shot. The new school law will apply to all students entering 7th grade in 2012 and beyond.

While whooping cough remained high at more than 3,000 cases in 2011, there have been no deaths since October 13th, 2010. The last time California had 3,000 cases of whooping cough was 2005. That year, eight infants died. In 1991, there were only 249 reported pertussis cases in California.

Young infants are the most vulnerable to serious whooping cough complications. Of 575 whooping cough cases among infants 3 months of age or younger reported during 2011, 244 (42 percent) were hospitalized. That’s a significant drop since 2010 when 59 percent of infected infants in that age group were hospitalized.

Immunity gained from pertussis vaccine wanes over time, so a booster shot is needed. The new school immunization law is intended to further protect communities by ensuring that adolescents, who may no longer be immune to whooping cough, are vaccinated. CDPH produced public service announcements in English and Spanish and partnered with the California Broadcasters Association to encourage media outlets to air the ads aimed at raising awareness about pertussis and the new California law. Adults, especially those who live or work with infants, are also strongly encouraged to get a Tdap shot.

To learn more about whooping cough in California, visit www.CDPH.ca.gov. To learn more about California's school immunization law, visit www.ShotsforSchool.org.

www.cdph.ca.gov

