

County of Santa Clara Public Health Department

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July 23, 2010

To: Santa Clara County EMS System Stakeholders

From: Eric M. Rudnick, MD
EMS Medical Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric M. Rudnick", is placed to the right of the printed name.

Subject: Pertussis (Whooping Cough) Incidence and Prevention

The incidence of Pertussis (whooping cough) is rising in Santa Clara County. Recently there was a transport involving a patient diagnosed with Pertussis in which prehospital personnel were exposed. EMS personnel will be retroactively contacted about such an exposure once a definitive diagnosis is made in these cases generally by the receiving facility.

The Santa Clara County Public Health Department has a recently updated informational brochure that is attached to this memo. This brochure describes common signs and symptoms as well as prevention techniques. I am requesting that you present this information to your personnel.

Most prehospital personnel will have had the usual childhood immunizations of which Pertussis is one. The immunity provided by the immunization can decrease over time. It may be necessary to augment the immunity with a booster shot. All personnel should check with their health care providers to see if it would be necessary to obtain a booster shot for Pertussis. Prehospital personnel are reminded that they need to use appropriate PPE during all patient encounters. Should the encounter involve a patient with a persistent cough and fever (greater than 1-2 weeks), a mask would be indicated.

Attachment:
Whooping Cough Be Aware. Treat it Early.

Whooping Cough

Be Aware. Treat It Early.



What Is Whooping Cough?

- Whooping cough disease (also called pertussis) causes coughing fits that make it hard to breathe.
- It spreads easily when someone with the disease coughs or sneezes.
- It can kill young babies.

Whooping Cough Signs and Symptoms

Early Symptoms

Often, symptoms start mild and are like a common cold:

- runny nose
- sneezing
- low or no fever
- mild cough

Symptoms After 1-2 Weeks

Symptoms can get worse fast and can last for months. They include bad coughing attacks that may lead to:

- vomiting
- a red or blue face
- a “whoop” sound
- problems breathing
- extreme tiredness
- sweating spells

Symptoms in Infants Are Different

Infants younger than 6 months old often do not have a typical cough. In the early stages, infants may:

- gasp or gag
- stop breathing
- get very tired
- have seizures

Symptoms can get worse very fast. Often, babies need to go to the hospital for care.

Treat Whooping Cough Early

Call Your Doctor If You or a Family Member:

- Are around someone who has whooping cough or a bad cough
- Have any symptoms of whooping cough

Your Doctor May Prescribe an Antibiotic Medicine

Early treatment with antibiotic medicine can:

- Keep you from getting sicker
- Prevent you from spreading the disease to others
- Be given to infants and other household members to prevent them from getting sick

If You Have Whooping Cough:

- Stay home. Avoid contact with others until you have finished treatment.
- If you are caring for an infant, have an adult who is not sick, feed, hold, and care for your baby.

Whooping Cough Shots Prevent the Disease

- Everyone needs to be up-to-date on their whooping cough shots (DTaP for kids younger than 7 years; or Tdap for older ages).
- Newborn babies are too young for the shots.
- Immunity from the disease or the shots wears off, so people 11 years and older need a booster shot.

Know the Symptoms. Call Your Doctor.

www.getimmunizedca.org

