



July 15, 2014

**LACDPH Health Advisory:
Large numbers of pertussis cases in Los Angeles County**

This message is intended for primary care, urgent care, emergency medicine, internal medicine, and infectious disease providers. Please distribute as appropriate.

Key communication

- **Large numbers of pertussis cases are being reported in Los Angeles County as California experiences a pertussis epidemic.**
- **Infants with pertussis have the greatest risk for complications, including death. Consider pertussis in any infant presenting with breathing difficulty or apnea**
- **Pertussis can have a long period of infectiousness if untreated (as long as 21 days). Treated cases remain communicable until after the 5th day of appropriate antibiotic regimens.**
- **Report all patients suspected of having pertussis immediately to the LA County Department of Public Health.**

Situation

The California Department of Public Health declared a state-wide epidemic of pertussis in June 2014. In Los Angeles County, 435 lab-confirmed and probable cases, and another 386 suspect cases have been reported as of July 7. This puts Los Angeles on track to exceed the number of pertussis cases reported in 2010, the last year during which there was a pertussis epidemic. To-date this year, three infants, two of whom became infected last year, have died from pertussis in California.

Actions requested of providers

- ✓ Consider pertussis in any patient who presents with an unremitting cough illness, and in infants that present with respiratory difficulty including gagging, gasping for air, and apnea.
- ✓ Order the appropriate specimens (nasopharyngeal swab or aspirate) for PCR testing or culture for *Bordetella pertussis* (DFA tests and serological tests are not acceptable for diagnosis).
- ✓ Treat any patients suspected of having pertussis with a regimen recommended by the Centers for Disease and Control and Prevention. Antibiotics effective against pertussis are: azithromycin, erythromycin, clarithromycin, or trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole.
- ✓ Monitor all infants suspected of having pertussis closely as they can quickly progress from mild and often inapparent respiratory distress to intractable respiratory failure. More than 80% of infants less than 2 months of age with pertussis will require hospitalization.

- ✓ Vaccinate all pregnant women against pertussis between the 27th and 36th weeks of each pregnancy, in order to maximize maternal antibody response and provide passive antibody transfer to the infant.
- ✓ IMMEDIATELY report any suspect cases of pertussis in Los Angeles County to the Morbidity Central Reporting Unit by phone at (888) 397-3993. (For persons residing in the Cities of Long Beach or Pasadena, see the phone numbers listed below.)

To file a report of a suspect pertussis case

Pertussis cases are one of the conditions that must be reported within one working day of identification to the local health department (Title 17, California Code of Regulations, § 2500).

Reporting suspect cases in Los Angeles County:

- Weekdays 7:30 am-5:00 pm call (888) 397-3993
- Non-business hours (before 7:30 am, after 5:00 pm, or weekends) call (213) 974-1234.

Reporting suspect cases in the cities of Long Beach or Pasadena, contact the local health department:

- Long Beach HD: (562) 570-4302
- Pasadena HD: (626) 744-6000

Additional Pertussis Resources

- For technical assistance: call LAC DPH Immunization Program Surveillance Unit at (213) 351-7800
- For more detailed information about the laboratory diagnosis, treatment, and chemoprophylaxis of pertussis please see *Pertussis Increasing in LA County*:
<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/eprp/Health%20Alerts/LACDPH%20HAN%20-%20Pertussis%20-%2012052013.pdf>
- For additional information visit:
http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Documents/CDPH_Pertussis%20quicksheet_January%202014.pdf

This Health Advisory was sent by Dr. A. Nelson El Amin, Medical Director, Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Immunization Program.

Please visit our LAHAN webpage:

<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/lahan>