

MAINE PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT NETWORK SYSTEM



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(Formerly Bureau of Health)
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****ADVISORY – Important Information****

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TO: All Academic, All Epidemiologists, HETL, All Local Public Health Liaisons, All Childcare, City and County Health Departments, All Healthcare, Lab Facilities, County EMA Directors, Northern New England Poison Center, Public Health - Required, Public Health Nursing, EMS, All RRCs

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SUBJECT: **Increase in Pertussis - Maine, December 20, 2010**

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Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC)
(Formerly Bureau of Health)

Increase in Pertussis – Maine, December 20, 2010

Background: Since November 1, 2010 there have been 13 cases of pertussis (whooping cough) reported to the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC). Cases have been reported in Cumberland, Aroostook, Androscoggin, and Hancock counties with an identified cluster of cases in Penobscot county. Cases range in age from 7 years to 60 years. In 2009, for the same time frame, 7 cases of pertussis were reported.

Pertussis is a highly communicable, vaccine-preventable disease that can last for many weeks. It is transmitted through direct contact with respiratory secretions of infected persons. Symptoms include cough, paroxysms, whoop, and post-tussive vomiting. Holiday activities bring individuals close together with an increased potential for transmission of this infection.

Recommendations:

Clinicians are encouraged to:

1. Consider pertussis when evaluating any patient with an acute illness characterized by cough >2 weeks in duration, or cough with paroxysms, whoop, or post-tussive vomiting. Infants may present with apnea and/or cyanosis.
2. Report known or suspected cases promptly to the Maine CDC at 1-800-821-5821. The Maine CDC follows up on reports to identify close contacts and recommend prophylaxis.
3. Persons who exhibit symptoms consistent with pertussis should be tested with a nasopharyngeal swab. The Maine CDC's Health and Environmental Testing Laboratory (HETL) tests specimens by culture and polymerase chain reaction (PCR) in addition to other reference labs in the state. Serologic testing through private laboratories has not been well standardized and should not be used. Information on HETL's testing is available at www.maine.gov/dhhs/etl/micro/submitting_samples.htm
4. Individuals with suspected pertussis should be treated after a nasopharyngeal specimen is collected for testing. Guidelines for antibiotic treatment for pertussis cases and contacts have been published by the federal CDC in the MMWR (December 9, 2005. RR-14) and are available at www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5414a1.htm.
5. Individuals with symptoms of pertussis should be considered to be infectious and should not attend school, work, or daycare until they have completed 5 days of an appropriate antibiotic. This is especially important for persons working in medical settings or with infants and young children.
6. Check patients aged less than or equal to 6 years to make sure they are up-to-date for age on DTaP vaccine. For those who are not, vaccination is recommended. Administration of the 4th and 5th doses is recommended for children who are eligible but have not yet received them. However, other supplemental vaccination is not recommended for children who are up to date for age. A Tdap booster is recommended for adolescents aged 11-18 years who received Dtap or DTP as children. Tdap can also be substituted one Td for persons aged 19-64 years.

Information on pertussis for members of the public:

- In 2009, nearly 17,000 cases of pertussis (whooping cough) were reported in the U.S., but many more go undiagnosed and unreported.
- Coughing fits due to pertussis infection can last for up to 10 weeks or more; sometimes known as the "100 day cough." Pertussis is also known as "whooping cough" because of the "whooping" sound that is made when gasping for air after a fit of coughing.
- Pertussis can cause serious illness in infants, children and adults and can even be life-threatening, especially in infants. More than half of infants less than 1 year of age who get pertussis must be hospitalized.
- The most effective way to prevent pertussis is through vaccination with DTaP for infants and children and with Tdap for pre-teens, teens and adults — protection from the childhood vaccine fades over time.
- Vaccinated children and adults can become infected with and transmit pertussis; however, disease is less likely to be severe.
- Vaccination of pre-teens, teens and adults with Tdap is especially important for families with new infants.
- Pertussis is generally treated with antibiotics, which are used to control the symptoms and to prevent infected people from spreading the disease.

For More Information: Disease reporting or consultation is available by calling 1-800-821-5821.