COMMUNICABLE DISEASE UNIT

PUBLIC HEALTH EXPOSURE NOTICE

2/3/15

Communicable Disease Incident: Pertussis (Whooping Cough)
Principal Public Health Nurse: Naomi Lobell, PHN (831) 454-4114

SITUATION

➢ The Public Health Department was notified of a student at UCSC with pertussis.
➢ Exposed individuals who become ill may develop symptoms through 2/18/15.

RECOMMENDATIONS

➢ If your child becomes ill with an increasingly severe cough, even if she/he has been vaccinated, contact your health care provider so that she/he can be evaluated for pertussis. Tell your health care provider that your child may have been exposed to pertussis.
➢ If your health care provider thinks your child has pertussis, antibiotics can decrease the severity of the illness and prevent spread of the disease if started early.
➢ If your child is diagnosed with pertussis, they should not participate in group activities, including school, until they have finished 5 days of antibiotic treatment. If antibiotics are not started, your child is considered contagious for up to 21 days after the start of the cough, and may not return to school for 21 days.

INFORMATION

➢ California, including Santa Cruz County, is currently experiencing a pertussis epidemic.
➢ Protection from vaccination is waning more quickly than expected. Even if your child has been vaccinated she/he may still get pertussis. However, evidence shows that people who have been previously vaccinated have significantly milder symptoms than those who have not been vaccinated.
➢ Pertussis in an infant, young child, or a person who is immunocompromised can be life threatening.
➢ It is recommended that pregnant women receive a Tdap vaccine in the third trimester of each pregnancy. Maternal antibodies have been shown to protect the newborn baby.
➢ Everyone who spends time around infants should be fully immunized against pertussis.
➢ By age 11, childhood vaccines against pertussis have worn off and no longer protect students. It is a school requirement that all entering 7th grade students receive a single dose of Tdap. Those students entering 8th – 12th grade who have not received a Tdap vaccine should be immunized as well.
➢ Adults should receive Tdap when they are due for their 10-year tetanus booster.

Pertussis is spread by coughing, sneezing, and talking during face-to-face contact (within 3 feet) with an ill person. Typical classroom or other casual contact is normally not sufficient to transmit pertussis. If exposed to pertussis, you may become ill 4-21 days later. Symptoms of pertussis begin with a mild cold that gets worse over a 1-2 week period. It progresses to fits of coughing that may be so severe that gagging or vomiting occurs. Usually the coughing is worse at night and while eating. Ultimately, the cough will resolve over a few weeks or months.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES: http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/Pertussis.aspx