



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

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COUNTY WORKING WITH NORTH COUNTY SCHOOL TO NOTIFY PARENTS, STUDENTS OF PERTUSSIS CASE

Precautions Urged Due to Loss of Vaccine Effectiveness After Several Years

The San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) is working closely with San Pasqual High School in Escondido (not affiliated with San Pasqual Academy) after a student was diagnosed with pertussis (whooping cough), a highly contagious disease that causes severe coughing.

The student, a 10th grader, has been out of school since May 18. Other students, faculty and staff may have been exposed during the first two weeks of May, and possibly the end of April.

"Due to the fact that immunization protection wears off after five to 10 years, previously vaccinated persons can develop the disease," said Wilma Wooten, M.D., M.P.H., County Public Health Officer. "We urge parents to ask their physicians about the new Tdap vaccine available for adolescents and adults."

"The health and welfare of our students and their families is of utmost importance," said Karen Rizzi, Escondido Union High School District Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services. "All families were notified by phone and provided information about the illness and recommendations on what to do if parents had concerns or questions."

Parents are urged to contact their physician if they or their children have or develop a cough. One reason for concern is that pertussis can be passed on to infants by their adult and adolescent household contacts, Dr. Wooten said.

Named for the "whoop" sound children and adults sometimes make when they try to breathe in during or after a severe coughing spell, whooping cough usually starts with flu-like symptoms, such as runny nose, sneezing, fever, and a mild cough. Symptoms can last up to two weeks and may be followed by severe coughing fits associated with vomiting. Fever, if present, is usually mild. It is treatable with antibiotics.

Whooping cough can occur at any age, but infants and young children are at highest risk of life-threatening complications, the most common of which is pneumonia which can lead to hospitalization. In adolescents and adults, rib fractures and difficulty sleeping occur. Anyone who is un-immunized is at a higher risk for severe whooping cough.

For more information about, please call the County HHSA Immunization Branch at (619) 692-8661, or visit the website at www.immunization-sd.org.

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