



**MAIN OFFICE**  
1250 Hollipark Drive  
Idaho Falls, ID 83401  
Phone: (208) 522-0310  
Fax: (208) 525-7063  
[www.idaho.gov/phd7](http://www.idaho.gov/phd7)

## **NEWS RELEASE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
June 29, 2010

Contact: Geri Rackow, PIO  
533-3155 / Cell 705-4615

### **CALIFORNIA PERTUSSIS EPIDEMIC SENDS WARNING**

#### *Parents Urged to Make Sure Children Are Up-to-Date on Immunizations*

The state of California has declared an epidemic of pertussis, also known as whooping cough, on the heels of more than 900 confirmed cases and the deaths of five babies. While there is no evidence of a similar rise in pertussis cases in Idaho, public health officials in Eastern Idaho believe this is a good time for parents to check the immunization status of their children.

Pertussis is a highly contagious disease that begins with cold-like symptoms, such as sneezing, runny nose, low-grade fever, and a mild cough. Over 1-2 weeks the cough may become much worse. Symptoms may include a long series of coughs ("coughing fits" or spasms) followed by a whooping noise. Persons with pertussis may have a series of coughs and then may vomit, turn blue, or experience difficulty in catching their breath. Untreated, pertussis can develop into pneumonia, seizures, and encephalitis. It is particularly dangerous for infants and young children. Most pertussis deaths occur in unvaccinated children or in children too young (under six months of age) to be vaccinated.

"Infants under six months of age and the unimmunized are at greatest risk," said Amy Gamett, RN, Nurse Manager at Eastern Idaho Public Health District (EIPHD). "Pertussis is a vaccine-preventable disease. Children need to be vaccinated against it. Many infants who get pertussis are infected by parents, older siblings, or other caregivers who might not know they have the disease. Therefore, it is also important for these individuals to receive a Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis) booster at least every 10 years."

People with pertussis usually spread the disease by coughing or sneezing while in close contact with others, who then breathe in the pertussis bacteria. It is important for us to learn from California and get our children and family members immunized against the disease because protection from the childhood vaccine fades over time.

And, now is a great time for parents to bring their children in for immunizations at the health district. "In August, we usually see the back-to-school rush as parents prepare to send their children back to school," Gamett stated. "Parents can avoid the crowds and longer wait times by scheduling their children's immunization appointment during July at any EIPHD office."

-- MORE --

For more information or to schedule an immunization appointment, call your local EIPHD office.

**Eastern Idaho Public Health District Offices**

Bonneville County	533-3235
Clark County (open Wednesdays)	374-5216
Custer County	879-2504
Fremont County	624-7585
Jefferson County (Rigby)	745-7297
Jefferson County (Mud Lake)	663-4860
Lemhi County	756-2123
Madison County	356-3239
Teton County	354-2220

# # #