



# News Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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## **Whooping Cough Cases Remain High In California**

*State Public Health Officials Encourage All Californians to Ensure Their Immunizations are Up-To-Date*

SACRAMENTO – Dr. Howard Backer, the Interim Director of the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), today warned that the number of pertussis (whooping cough) cases in 2011 continues to be above both the 2009 baseline levels and the numbers seen by this time last year. Backer also encouraged parents to ensure that their adolescent's immunizations are up-to-date in compliance with a new California law that is slated to go into effect July 1, 2011.

"In 2010, California experienced a record high number of pertussis illnesses, including 10 infant deaths," said Backer. "While it is too early to know if this year will reach the same high levels of this debilitating disease, California is currently experiencing more cases than would be typically expected, but fortunately no fatalities."

Backer also called on parents of children in grades seven through 12, to ensure that they comply with AB 354, which requires documentation of an adolescent pertussis booster shot prior to school entry. More than one million students statewide still remain to be vaccinated before the fall semester.

"Vaccination, including critical booster shots, is the best defense against pertussis," added Backer. "Parents of 7th to 12th graders must ensure that their children receive the necessary booster shot to avoid a delay in having their children start classes in the fall semester."

The vaccination series for pertussis can begin at the age of 6 weeks. Infants, however, are not adequately protected by vaccination until the initial series of three shots is complete. For new mothers and anyone in close contact with infants, CDPH encourages a "cocooning strategy," where individuals in close contact are vaccinated to protect the not-fully-immunized infant. Anyone who might be coming into contact with newborns and young infants should ensure that their immunizations are up-to-date.

Pertussis is a highly contagious disease. Unimmunized or incompletely immunized young infants are particularly vulnerable to severe disease. Numbers of reported pertussis cases typically increase during the summer months. More information on pertussis and the numbers of reported cases is available at <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/Pertussis.aspx>.

[www.cdph.ca.gov](http://www.cdph.ca.gov)

