

# California is facing a whooping cough epidemic. Protect infants and children at your childcare center.

### What is whooping cough?

Whooping cough (pertussis) is a contagious disease that can be spread when a person coughs or sneezes. It can cause serious illness, especially in infants under 6 months of age, leading to hospitalization and even death.

### Whooping cough cases are on the rise in LA County.

In recent months, there have been increasing numbers of whooping cough cases and deaths in California and Los Angeles County. In fact, there have been more confirmed and probable whooping cough cases reported in LA County as for the entire year of 2009 and four infants have died. Because of the number of cases and the infant deaths, the California Department of Public Health declared a pertussis epidemic in California on June 23, 2010.

### Whooping cough can be serious for anyone, but especially for infants under 6 months of age.

Whooping cough leads to violent and rapid spells of coughing that can last for up to 10 weeks. Adults and teens typically have milder symptoms, but can still be hospitalized, miss weeks of work or school and spread the disease easily to infants who are at greatest risk for serious complications. Infants may gasp, gag, stop breathing, and have seizures. Symptoms can get worse very fast and babies can become seriously ill or die without warning.

### Childcare providers can protect children from whooping cough.

Childcare providers are dedicated to keeping the children they care for healthy. They can take the following steps to protect themselves, their own families, and the children that they care for from whooping cough.

#### 1. Get vaccinated against whooping cough.

Getting vaccinated is the best way to prevent whooping cough. If you have not received a Tdap vaccine, get vaccinated. The Tdap vaccine protects against whooping cough and prevents it from spreading to infants who are too young to be fully vaccinated and most likely to suffer from serious complications.

Seek vaccination through your regular healthcare provider. If you do not have a regular healthcare provider or health insurance, dial 2-1-1 or visit [www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip](http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip) for a list of low-cost immunization clinics.

#### 2. Encourage families that you care for to get vaccinated.

Let parents know that to protect themselves and their children, the whole family should be vaccinated. Remind them that California law requires that children be up-to-date before they enter childcare and that parents, including pregnant women, should be vaccinated too.

#### 3. Promote preventive tips to avoid the spread of whooping cough.

Encourage clients and staff to:

- Cover their nose and mouth with a tissue or sleeve when coughing/sneezing.
- Wash their hands often with soap and water and/or use gel sanitizers.
- Avoid touching their eyes, nose, or mouth since germs spread that way.
- Avoid close contact with sick people and stay home if they are sick.



## Resources for Childcare Providers

### Download at [www.eziz.org](http://www.eziz.org)

- Tdap Flyer for Parents Flyer (English, Spanish and Chinese)
- Whooping Cough Information for Pregnant Women (English and Spanish)
- Whooping Cough - Be Aware. Treat It Early. Flyer (English and Spanish)
- Childcare Provider Whooping Cough and Flu Poster
- Pertussis Educational Phone and Email Messages
- Respiratory Disease Prevention Posters (Multilingual)

## Recommended Steps for Childcare Providers

- Get vaccinated.
- Encourage clients to get vaccinated.
- Promote preventive tips.

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