



Charlie Crist  
Governor

Ana M. Viamonte Ros, M.D., M.P.H.  
State Surgeon General

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**Increase in whooping cough cases points to need for wider vaccination**  
- Individuals in close contact with infants should be vaccinated -

PENSACOLA – With an increase in state and local outbreaks of pertussis, historically known as “whooping cough”, local health officials are launching an informational campaign to remind families about the importance of booster vaccinations against this very contagious disease. Pertussis can be especially dangerous to newborn infants who are too young to get vaccinated. Studies have shown that newborns often get the disease from teenagers and adults in their family or other close contacts.

“In a normal year, there are three to five cases reported, but already in 2009, we have 50 cases,” said Dr. John Lanza, Director of the Escambia County Health Department. “Because it can be so dangerous for newborns, it is important for the teenage and adult family members to talk with their physician about getting vaccinated against pertussis.”

The informational campaign includes radio spots featuring the actress and singer Jennifer Lopez. The campaign also includes billboards. Copies of the radio spot and billboard are attached to this press release.

Most teens and adults were vaccinated for pertussis when they were a child. However, if there is going to be a newborn in their home, they should talk with their physician about getting vaccinated again. This infection is also serious for people with weakened immune systems and the elderly. If it has been two or more years since a teen or adult received a tetanus shot, it may be appropriate for them to receive the TDaP shot. Individuals should talk with their physician or the Escambia County Health Department about getting the vaccination.

Vaccinations are available at the health department and from many private physicians. The vaccine that children aged 6 weeks to 7 years old receive is the DTaP (diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis, pronounced Dee-TAP) vaccine. The vaccine that children of 11 years old through adults of 64 years old receive is the TDaP (tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis, pronounced Tee-DAP).

This disease is very contagious and is spread from person to person through the droplets from a cough. The main symptom is a cough that lasts for 2 weeks to several months. The cough can be very serious. Individuals may be unable to catch their breath and begin to turn blue. Severe coughs can also lead to vomiting, sleep loss, weight loss, nose bleeds, rib fractures, hernia and even pneumonia. In infants, the cough may have a “whoop” sound at the end.

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People who have these symptoms should see a doctor. There are specific antibiotics that treat pertussis. Also, see a doctor if you have a cough and have been exposed to someone who has been diagnosed with pertussis.

Additional information about the disease, what infected individuals should do, and vaccination recommendations are available at [www.EscambiaHealth.com](http://www.EscambiaHealth.com)

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