

**With Pertussis cases on the rise in North Carolina, DHHS provides
vaccines for children and adults**

State health director urges children and other vulnerable people to get vaccinated

RALEIGH – Recent outbreaks of pertussis (whooping cough) across the state have renewed calls from state health officials for North Carolinians to be immunized against this highly contagious but preventable respiratory disease. In response to the outbreak, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services-administered Immunization Program (NCIP) has made Tdap vaccine, which protects against pertussis, available to anyone age 7 years and older, including adults, regardless of their insurance status.

Between December and the first week of June, state public health officials had tracked 179 cases of whooping cough covering 23 counties; Alamance County alone has seen 122 cases. There were just 126 cases of pertussis reported to the state in all of 2011.

The disease does not only affect children; adults also can develop whooping cough and are often not diagnosed until later in the illness. Pertussis is spread from person to person usually by coughing or sneezing while in close contact with others.

DHHS is providing the Tdap vaccine to health care providers in the NCIP network, which includes all local health departments and many public and private health-care providers.

The Tdap booster shot is recommended for any child 7–10 who did not complete the childhood DTaP vaccination series and anyone 11 and older who has not yet received a Tdap booster. Tdap is particularly recommended for:

- women who are pregnant or may become pregnant;
- all close contacts of infants under 12 months of age (parents, siblings, grandparents, household contacts, child care providers); and
- anyone with a pre-existing, chronic respiratory disease.

The DTaP vaccination series is recommended for children starting at 2 months of age, and continuing at 4 months, 6 months, 15-18 months and 4-6 years of age. A Tdap booster shot should be given to children by 11 years of age because immunity from the childhood vaccines wears off over time. Teens and adults who haven't yet received a pertussis booster shot should also be vaccinated.

For more information, visit: <http://www.immunize.nc.gov/family/vaccines/pertussis.htm>

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