

NEW MEXICO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
Secretary Michelle Lujan Grisham

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Contact: Deborah
827-2619, 470-2290

State Investigates Pertussis Outbreak in Santa Fe County

(Santa Fe) – The New Mexico Department of Health announced today that it is investigating a community-wide outbreak of 24 pertussis cases in Santa Fe County from August to October. The department is providing treatment to sick individuals and preventative antibiotics to their families and close contacts.

“We want to remind you that whooping cough is an ongoing problem in New Mexico, and we all need to work together to prevent new cases, particularly since infants are at such high risk of severe complications from this disease,” said Health Secretary Michelle Lujan Grisham. “One way to protect your children is to get them immunized starting at age 2 months.”

The current outbreak in Santa Fe County has affected males and females from infants to the elderly. In New Mexico, 196 cases of pertussis were reported in 2005, including four in Santa Fe County. So far this year, there have been 86 cases of pertussis reported from 13 counties.

Pertussis is a bacterial respiratory infection that is contagious and seen in all age groups. The disease may begin with cold-like symptoms, such as runny nose, sore throat and a mild cough. The cough frequently becomes more severe and can include cough spasms that make it hard to catch a breath. There may be a gasp or “whoop” or vomiting at the end of a coughing spell.

There are two new pertussis vaccines licensed for adolescents and adults in the U.S. The Department of Health recommends adolescents age 11 to 18 and adults 19 to 64 receive a “booster” tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis vaccine.

The Department of Health also recommends:

Vaccinate all children under 7 years of age: All children should receive the full vaccination series for pertussis (a total of five doses of pertussis-containing vaccine by 6 years of age).

Prompt diagnosis and antibiotic treatment: Anyone with a cough illness lasting two weeks or longer or anyone who has unexplained coughing spasms should be evaluated for pertussis.

Preventive antibiotics for close contacts of cases: Anyone who has been in contact with a pertussis case should see a health-care provider or their local public health office.

Isolate cases during first five days of antibiotic treatment: Anyone starting antibiotics to treat pertussis should stay home and avoid contact with all persons outside of the household for five days after starting antibiotics.

There has been an increase in pertussis in the U.S. since the 1980s. Most recently, pertussis cases have been steadily increasing in the U.S. since 2002 and in New Mexico since 2003.