Infant Death From Pertussis

The Santa Barbara County Public Health Department sadly reports the death of a 25 day old infant from pertussis. The department extends sympathy to the family that lost a child whose life had just begun.

This is the first recorded death from pertussis in Santa Barbara County. It is the second death in the state of California for 2014 (the onset of pertussis was in 2014.)

Pertussis is a vaccine preventable disease. Children and adults who do not receive the recommended pertussis vaccine place the broader community at risk - particularly those at highest risk such as newborns and young infants, those with medical conditions and others who cannot receive the vaccine for medical reasons. Immunization is recommended for all pregnant women. Anyone in close contact with infants, including healthcare workers and extended family members, should receive the Tdap vaccine if they have not yet received it. This strategy of "cocooning" (vaccinating the people around infants) protects vulnerable infants.

The Tdap vaccine does wane over time. Thus, boosters are recommended. A Tdap booster is recommended for adolescents and for anyone this age or older who has not yet received it.

Following the verification of a pertussis diagnosis, the Public Health Department conducts an investigation to identify others who may have been exposed. This investigation process is a core public health function to prevent the spread of disease.

California is experiencing a pertussis epidemic. This year, California is seeing the highest number of pertussis cases in 70 years. Pertussis is cyclical and peaks every 3 - 5 years. Over the past five years, Santa Barbara County has had the following number of pertussis cases:
2010 - 66 cases
2011 - 18 cases
2012 - 11 cases
2013 - 28 cases
2014 - 113 cases

For more information on pertussis, please visit our Immunization Program website www.sbcphd.org/iz.

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