According to Dr. Ron Chapman, Director of the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), the number of pertussis (whooping cough) cases in the state has reached epidemic proportions. “Preventing severe disease and death in infants is our highest priority,” says Dr. Chapman. With two-thirds of pertussis hospitalizations occurring in children four months of age or younger, CDPH is urging vaccination of pregnant women with each pregnancy and infants as soon as possible.

Tdap vaccination for pregnant women is the best way to protect infants who are too young to be vaccinated. All pregnant women should be vaccinated with Tdap in the third trimester of each pregnancy, regardless of previous Tdap vaccination. Pertussis vaccination allows antibodies to be transferred from vaccinated mothers to their infants and will help protect them until they are old enough to be vaccinated. In addition, infants should be vaccinated as soon as possible. The first dose of pertussis vaccine can be given as early as 6 weeks of age. The primary DTaP vaccine series is essential for reducing severe disease in young infants and should not be delayed.

Older children, pre-adolescents, and adults should also be vaccinated against pertussis according to current recommendations. It is particularly important that persons who will be around newborns also be vaccinated.

The symptoms of pertussis vary by age. For children, a typical case of pertussis starts with a cough and runny nose for one to two weeks. The cough then worsens and children may have rapid coughing spells that end with a “whooping” sound. Young infants may not have typical pertussis symptoms and may have no apparent cough. Parents may describe episodes in which the infant’s face turns red or purple. For adults, pertussis may simply be a cough that persists for several weeks.

As of July 8, 2014, there have been 5,393 pertussis cases reported to the CDPH for a state rate of 14.1 per 100,000 population. In Santa Barbara County, 29 cases have been reported with a case rate of 6.71. In the first 6 months of 2012, Santa Barbara County reported 4 cases. In 2013, Santa Barbara County reported 2 cases in same time frame. This year, in contrast, Santa Barbara County reported 25 cases of pertussis from January to June. CDPH Pertussis Summary Reports can be found at http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/immunize/Pages/PertussisSummaryReports.aspx

Please continue to report suspected and confirmed pertussis cases to the Santa Barbara County Disease Control Program electronically via the CalREDIE Provider Portal. For CalREDIE Provider Portal enrollment information, please visit our website at: www.sbcphd.org/dcp. (Source: California Department of Public Health. Immunization Branch. Pertussis Summaries, 2014)
Did you spot the smoking product in the last edition of Health Matters? You likely had to give the photo a close look to guess. Answer: The blue product on the left is for smoking! Though it looks like there are three regular pens in the pocket, the blue one is a different type of pen. It is called a hookah pen. A hookah pen (also referred to as an electronic cigarette or e-cigarette) is a type of battery powered smoking device that heats up nicotine and emits a vapor when used. For this reason, e-cigarette use is sometimes referred to as “vaping.”

Electronic smoking products like hookah pens come in an array of colors, sizes and flavors. They can resemble a pen or other common items (asthma inhaler, cola can, etc.) and come in youth-friendly flavors, such as cotton candy or mint chip. Unlike costly custom refillable vaporizing devices like the one shown below, hookah pens emit “no smoke”. They are odorless or sweet smelling. This makes their use easier to hide. The majority of these e-products contain nicotine—thus, they are addictive. This is a major concern, seeing as hookah pens are wildly popular among middle and high school aged youth.

Most of the buzz surrounding these products has to do with their safety. Some argue that while electronic smoking devices contain nicotine, they are not packed with the thousands of chemicals in regular cigarettes and, therefore, are safer. Most of the marketing describes them as containing “harmless water vapor”. However, e-cigarettes are by no means chemical-free. Traces of cadmium, benzene, formaldehyde and other harmful chemicals have been found in these products. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has yet to regulate them, meaning their safety has not been tested or approved. The vaping industry often markets these devices as nicotine quitting aides. While these devices may have helped some quit smoking, there is a lack of scientific proof that such products are any more effective to help with quitting than other nicotine replacements therapies like the lozenge or patch. In fact, some research shows higher relapse rate among people who use vaporizers to help them quit smoking and many users are dually addicted to these products, while still using conventional tobacco.

For more information about electronic smoking devices, visit http://no-smoke.org/learnmore.php?id=645 or contact phdtobacco@sbcphd.org.

WIC Facts

The WIC (Women, Infants and Children) Nutrition Program of Santa Barbara County Public Health is funded to provide services to 19,000 low income, nutritionally at-risk, pregnant women, mothers of babies and young children under age 5.

81% of participants enrolled receive Medi-Cal, 28% receive CalFresh (Food Stamps) and 10% receive CalWORKs.

48 supermarkets and grocery stores county-wide redeem WIC checks adding over $13.5 million annually to the local economy. Additionally, over $52,000 worth of fresh produce is purchased by WIC families during the summer at Certified Farmers’ Markets.

Nine WIC sites provide services throughout Santa Barbara County. Four sites are co-located with the PHD Health Care Centers. The program’s 41 staff provide nutrition education, breastfeeding education and support, referral to services and vouchers/checks for healthy foods.

For more information contact Caro Stinson, Director of Nutrition Services at 681-5279