GOVERNMENT OF GUÅHAN

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
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The Department of Public Health and Social Services (DPHSS) has been made aware of the ongoing epidemic of Pertussis **(whooping cough)** in California.

Pertussis is a highly contagious disease of the respiratory tract caused by Bordetella Pertussis. Unimmunized or incompletely immunized young infants are particularly vulnerable. Although the symptoms may initially resemble an ordinary cold, whooping cough may develop into a much more serious disease, particularly in infants. In the more advanced stages, it causes a severe, hacking cough followed by a high-pitched intake of breath that sounds like **"whoop."**

The Pertussis vaccine is safe for children and adults, vaccination begins at two months of age, but young infants are not adequately protected until the initial series of three shots is complete at 6 months of age. Pregnant women may be vaccinated against Pertussis before pregnancy, during pregnancy or after giving birth. Fathers may be vaccinated at any time, but preferably before the birth of their baby. Others who may have contact with infants, including family members, health care workers, childcare workers, should also be vaccinated

It would be advisable for persons traveling to these areas to make sure they have been vaccinated against Pertussis (the vaccination may be combined diphtheria and tetanus vaccines) before departing. Since much of the travel from these areas passes through Guam, it is also possible that the disease may be brought here.

DPHSS encourages parents to protect their infants and young children by minimizing exposure (close contact) to persons who have cold symptoms or cough illness. Individuals should contact their regular health care provider or DPHSS' Immunization Program to inquire about Pertussis vaccination. In addition, it is essential that children receive all their shots on time to prevent and control this disease. **DPHSS recommends parents to ensure that their infants under one year receive the Diphtheria, Tetanus, and acellular Pertussis (DTaP) vaccine at 2 months, 4 months and 6 months of age.** Children should receive the fourth dose of DTaP vaccine at 15 months of age and an additional dose of DTaP before they start school. **All clinicians are advised to routinely check if their patients are appropriately vaccinated.**

All health care providers on Guam are urged to be on alert for possible cases of Pertussis and to promptly report suspect cases **to** the Immunization Program, Bureau of Communicable Disease Control, at 735-7148/7143 or 735-7135. For more information, please contact Annette Aguon or Annie Lizama at 735-7143/7160.

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