



SUSANA MARTINEZ, GOVERNOR

CATHERINE D. TORRES, M.D., CABINET SECRETARY

For immediate release:  
Nov. 22, 2011

Media contact: Chris J. Minnick  
Cell: 575-649-0754

**Dept of Health Reports Pertussis Cases Still on the Rise in New Mexico**  
*Parents and Families Urged to Make Sure Immunizations are Up-To-Date*

(Santa Fe) – The New Mexico Department of Health reported today that pertussis cases are still on the rise in New Mexico and throughout many parts of the United States. So far in 2011, there have been 243 cases of pertussis reported to the Department of Health. There were 150 cases in 2010, 94 cases in 2009 and 85 cases in 2008. The Department of Health is urging parents to make sure their child’s immunizations are up-to-date and adults should be sure they are vaccinated to prevent spreading pertussis to others.

Pertussis, also known as “whooping cough,” is a serious, highly contagious bacterial respiratory infection. The initial symptoms of pertussis resemble a cold-like illness and are characterized by runny nose, decreased appetite, malaise and either a low-grade or no fever. After several days, however, people will develop a spasmodic cough that is characterized by coughing fits which may result in vomiting. Sometimes people with pertussis will produce a “whoop” sound while trying to catch their breath following a coughing fit.

“Immunizations are the best tool we have to protect children against this serious disease, so all parents and families should make sure that their children are immunized,” said Department of Health Cabinet Secretary, Dr. Catherine Torres. “Families with infants need to make sure their immunizations are up-to-date because infants less than two months of age are completely unprotected because they cannot receive pertussis vaccine. Children are not considered fully immunized and protected until they have received the dose required at 15 to 18 month of age.”

In New Mexico, children should receive:

- A primary series of pertussis vaccine at 2, 4, 6 and 15-18 months of age
- A booster dose prior to school entry at 4 to 6 years of age
- A second booster dose at entry to middle school

Over time, the protection produced by the vaccine begins to wear off, leaving adolescents and adults once again susceptible to contracting pertussis. The Department of Health recommends that any adolescent or adult who will be in close contact with an infant receive a pertussis vaccine called Tdap. By assuring that everyone around an infant has received Tdap a protective “cocoon” is formed around infants. New or expectant parents interested in “cocooning” should



**Office of the Secretary**

1190 St. Francis Drive, N4100 • P.O. Box 26110 Santa Fe, New Mexico • 87502-6110  
(505) 827-2613 • FAX: (505) 827-2530 • <http://www.nmhealth.org>

ask their physicians about receiving a Tdap shot, and should suggest that their immediate family members or anyone else who will be in direct contact with the infant, do the same.

Persons with pertussis are most infectious during the early stages of the disease, including the first two weeks of cough, and need to be treated with antibiotics and excluded from work, school and other group activities in order to prevent the spread of infection. Infants and young children are the most vulnerable to pertussis, especially those younger than 4 months of age. Approximately 75 percent of infants who get pertussis contract the disease from a family member.

The Department of Health provides free immunizations at public health clinics in every county for children whose parents are not insured. To find a Public Health Office in your area go online to [www.nmhealth.org](http://www.nmhealth.org) or look in the blue pages of your local phone book.

# # #