

Whooping cough epidemic grows; vaccine urged

By Bobby Caina Calvin, Sacramento Bee

State health officials today urged more Californians to get vaccinated for whooping cough, as the disease grew to epidemic proportions.

To date, about 1,500 people in California have become infected with pertussis – a five-fold increase from the same time last year. Five infants, all under 3 months old, have died from the disease, and one additional case is under investigation by the California Department of Public Health.

“We are facing what could be the worst year for pertussis that this state has seen in more than 50 years,” said Dr. Gilberto Chavez, the agency’s chief of the state’s Center for Infectious Diseases.

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