

Worst whopping cough outbreak since 1955

By Rong-Gong Lin II, Los Angeles Times

Babies have been hardest hit by whooping cough in California, according to new statistics released by the state Department of Public Health.

All nine deaths so far this year have been among infants under 3 months old. Among patients who are critically ill with the disease, babies have also been disproportionately hospitalized.

According to the data released late Wednesday, of 196 patients known to have been hospitalized with whooping cough in California, 74% were infants under 6 months old and most – 57% – were under 3 months old.

Whooping cough is often spread to babies by parents, siblings, aunts, uncles and grandparents and other adults. Because infants do not begin vaccinations until they are 2 months old, health officials for months have been pleading for anyone who expects to be in contact with babies – especially pregnant women – to get vaccinated.

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