

Vaccinations necessary before start of next school year

Parents of children entering seventh grade this fall can be ahead of the game by getting their preteen vaccinated now with the pertussis vaccine booster dose, also known as Tdap. Beginning with the 2012-13 school year, and for all future school years, California law requires incoming seventh-grade students in public and private schools to show proof of Tdap vaccination before starting school.

Pertussis, also known as whooping cough, is a contagious respiratory infection that can lead to severe coughing fits, hospitalizations, and death among unprotected individuals, particularly infants. The California law requiring the Tdap vaccine for adolescents was passed in response to the epidemic of whooping cough in California in 2010 that resulted in 9,477 cases, hundreds of hospitalizations and 10 infant deaths.

Studies have shown that immunity developed from early childhood vaccination starts to wear off around adolescence. A large number of pertussis cases in 2010 were among middle school and high school aged children. In addition to whooping cough, the Tdap vaccine also protects the body against tetanus and diphtheria.

The El Dorado County Health and Human Services Agency's Public Health Division offers the Tdap vaccine, and other childhood and adolescent vaccines, by appointment at low cost. To schedule a vaccination appointment, call (530) 621.6100 in Placerville or (530) 573.3155 in South Lake Tahoe.