

Whooping cough alert in Carson City, Carson Valley

An outbreak of whooping cough, or pertussis, in the Carson City and Douglas County areas has been reported by Carson City Health & Human Services.

CCHHS is reporting the outbreak as an isolated event, however, the health department is encouraging families in the community to take preventive measures.

Whooping cough is a very serious respiratory infection caused by the pertussis bacteria. It causes violent coughing you can't stop. Whooping cough is most harmful for young babies and can be deadly.

If you believe that you or your child has signs and symptoms of whooping cough or have questions about the illness, contact your healthcare provider immediately or the health department at 775.283.7220 or CCHHSinfo@carson.org.

Whooping cough starts with the following symptoms:

- Runny or stuffed-up nose
- Sneezing
- Mild Cough
- A pause in breathing in infants (apnea).

After 1 to 2 weeks, coughing, which can be severe, begins. Children and babies may then begin to develop these more serious problems:

- Coughing, very hard and continual.
- Gasping for breath after a coughing fit. Babies may not cough or make this sound—they may gag and gasp.
- Difficulty breathing, eating, drinking, or sleeping because of coughing fits. These coughing fits happen more at night.

- Turning blue while coughing from lack of oxygen.
- Vomiting after coughing fits.

Coughing fits can last for 10 weeks, and sometimes happen again the next time the child has a respiratory illness.

Whooping cough spreads easily through the air when a person who has whooping cough breathes, coughs, or sneezes. Almost everyone who is not immune to whooping cough will get sick if exposed to it. A person can spread the disease from the very beginning of the sickness (when she has cold-like symptoms) and for at least two weeks after coughing starts.

The best way to protect children against whooping cough is by having them get the diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis shot, also called the DTaP shot. For everyone 11 years of age and older, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends the tetanus- diphtheria-pertussis (Tdap) shot.