



### Health Advisory

To: All El Paso Area Medical Providers

From: Hector Ocaranza, M.D.  
Health Authority  
Bruce Parsons, Assistant Director  
City of El Paso Department of Public Health

Date: May 14, 2012

Subject: Pertussis Intervention

The City of El Paso Department of Public Health is asking for your cooperation in reducing the number of pertussis cases in our region. The department has investigated a total of 14 cases so far this year, as compared to six cases identified in all of 2011. In an effort to prevent the overwhelming number of cases seen in other areas of the state and in other parts of the country, we are asking for your partnership in combating this disease. As you know, vaccination is the best way to prevent the disease and so the following is a list of ways you can support our efforts.

- Promote the vaccine for all expectant mothers, and adult members of the household who will come in contact with the newborn child
- Encourage all adult clients to be vaccinated against pertussis
- Educate the family about the signs and symptoms of the disease

Recently the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommended a strategy called Cocooning to protect infants against pertussis and other infectious diseases. Cocooning is a practice of vaccinating all close contacts of infants to protect the newborn from disease. By getting a pertussis-containing vaccine (Tdap), adults and adolescents remain disease free, thereby protecting infants from pertussis. Please find attached the Pertussis Cocooning Handbook and make it available to your staff.

#### *Background*

Pertussis symptoms appear five to twenty-one days after infection. Usually only close contacts of people with pertussis become infected.



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Pertussis begins with cold-like symptoms (sneezing and a runny nose) and a cough that gradually becomes worse. After one to two weeks, the cough usually occurs in strong “coughing fits.” In young children, this is often followed by a whooping noise as they try to catch their breath.

After coughing, a person may have difficulty catching their breath, vomit, or become blue in the face from lack of air. Between coughing spells, the person may appear well. There is generally no fever. The cough is often worse at night and cough medicines usually do not help reduce the coughing. Coughing fits can last six weeks or longer. Adults, teens, and vaccinated children often have milder symptoms, similar to bronchitis or asthma.

It is important to remember that people with pertussis are contagious until they have completed 5 days of antibiotics. According to the Department of State Health Services, children who have pertussis are not permitted to return to school until they have completed 5 days of antibiotics. Persons who are diagnosed with pertussis should be advised by their health care provider to remain home until 5 days of antibiotics are completed.

In order to help contain the spread of pertussis, all household and close contacts of someone diagnosed with pertussis should also receive antibiotics and a pertussis-containing vaccine (such as Tdap) even if they are not coughing. Close contact is generally defined as being within 1-2 feet of someone with pertussis for 1-2 hours.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your continued cooperation in making sure health is a top priority in El Paso.

Sincerely,

Hector Ocaranza, M.D.  
Health Authority

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Public Health Assistant Director

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