

MAINE PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT NETWORK SYSTEM



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****ADVISORY – Important Information****

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TO: Childcare facilities, City and County Health, County EMA, Department of Education, Maine EMS, Eastern Maine Health, FQHC's, Hospitals, Labs, Infectious Disease, Maine Community Health, Maine Health Care Association, Maine Hospital Association, Maine Medical Association, Maine Primary Care Association, Maine Public Health Association, Municipals Offices, Physician Practices, Regional Resource Centers

FROM: Dr. Sheila Pinette, Maine CDC Director

SUBJECT: Pertussis Update for Providers

DATE: Wednesday, December 10, 2014

TIME: 11:20am

PAGES: 2

PRIORITY: Normal

Pertussis Update for Providers – Maine, December 2014

Background: Cases of pertussis continue to be reported statewide, with an increased number of cases reported from Androscoggin, Penobscot, Piscataquis, and Waldo counties in the last month. As of December 10, providers reported a total of 453 pertussis cases from all 16 counties. Eight Maine counties have rates higher than the state rate (Aroostook, Knox, Lincoln, Penobscot, Piscataquis, Somerset, Waldo, and Washington counties). The majority of the cases (85%) are in school aged children and over a third (36%) of the cases were reported since school started in the fall.

Pertussis is a highly communicable, vaccine-preventable disease that can last for many weeks. It is transmitted through direct contact with respiratory secretions of infected persons. Classic pertussis symptoms include paroxysmal cough, whoop, and posttussive vomiting. Pertussis can cause serious illness and can even be life-threatening, especially in infants. More than half of infants less than 1 year of age with pertussis require hospitalization.

Parapertussis is not a reportable condition and there are no specific public health recommendations for cases.

Clinicians are encouraged to:

1. Consider pertussis when evaluating any patient with an acute illness characterized by cough >2 weeks in duration, or cough with paroxysms, whoop (often this is absent), or posttussive vomiting. Infants may present with gasping, gagging, apnea and/or cyanosis. Consider testing for individuals with cough <2 weeks if they have an epidemiological link to confirmed cases.
2. Test persons who exhibit symptoms consistent with pertussis. Samples can be sent to Maine's Health and Environmental Laboratory (HETL) or another clinical laboratory. Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) is the preferred testing method. Healthcare workers should be sure to follow standard precautions when seeing/testing suspect cases.
3. Treat patients diagnosed with pertussis with appropriate antibiotics and exclude from daycare, work, camp, and social activities until 5 days of treatment is completed. Exclusion should be started prior to receiving test results. If test is negative patient can return to activities; if positive, patient remains excluded for the 5 days of treatment.
4. Offer prophylaxis to asymptomatic household and high-risk contacts of persons diagnosed with pertussis (e.g. infants and their household contacts, pregnant women, healthcare workers), regardless of vaccination status. Asymptomatic contacts DO NOT need to be excluded from activities.
5. Check the vaccination status of all patients and ensure they are up-to-date on pertussis vaccination. Pregnant women should receive Tdap in the third trimester of EACH pregnancy.

If pertussis is a possible diagnosis in a young infant, treatment with azithromycin should be started immediately pending test results. The severity of illness in an infant with pertussis is unpredictable and clinical decline is often rapid. All young infants (aged \leq 3 months) with possible pertussis should be admitted to the hospital and many will require PICU care. Additional information on the diagnosis and management of young infants with pertussis can be found on Maine CDC's website at: <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/vaccine/documents/Pertussis-Infants-Guidance-Clinicians.docx>

For More Information:

- Maine CDC's website <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/vaccine/pertussis.shtml>.
- For information about pertussis vaccine or vaccine schedules, please contact the Maine Immunization Program at www.immunizeme.org or by calling 1-800-867-4775.
- Maine CDC epidemiologists are available to answer any questions about pertussis diagnosis or management through the 24/7 disease reporting line at 1-800-821-5821.