



Public Health Advisory

Sharp Increase in Pertussis Cases Amongst Infants and Young Children

Issued June 7, 2021

This message is intended for urgent care, primary care, pediatric, family, emergency, and other medical providers and staff. **Please distribute as appropriate.**

Key Messages

- Since mid-April, 2021, there has been an increase in reported pertussis cases in Pima County, mainly amongst children age five and under.
- Providers should have a high suspicion and consider pertussis even in vaccinated persons with minimal to mild pertussis related symptoms.
- Pertussis is highly contagious. Treated cases remain communicable through the 5th day of appropriate antibiotic treatment. Patients should not be approved to return to school/work/activity until completion of at least five days of treatment.
- Providers must report all suspected cases to the Health Department within one working day **without** waiting for laboratory confirmation.

Situation Update

- Arizona Department of Health Services reports 53 total cases statewide of pertussis in 2021.
- 29 of these cases have been reported in Pima County alone, with 39 cases having been or currently being investigated by PCHD.
- 39 percent of cases reported attending childcare.
- Thus far, cases have resulted in mild illness and no hospitalizations or deaths have been reported.
- Because of the waning immunity from pertussis-containing vaccines and the increased exposure in facilities with multiple cases, providers should consider pertussis even in vaccinated persons with minimal to mild symptoms, especially in adolescents.

Recommendations for Providers

- Consider pertussis in any child, adolescent, or adult who presents with a persistent cough illness, especially if it is associated with coughing paroxysms or whoop. Infants with pertussis may present with difficulty breathing and/or a cough.
- Consider pertussis in any individual with a cough who presents a notification letter from the Health Department or gives a history indicating a possible exposure to a pertussis case or to someone who had a persistent cough.
- Obtain specimens for confirmation of the diagnosis in accordance with your contracted laboratory provider. **Bordetella pertussis PCR test is recommended, if available.**
- Treat suspect cases with an appropriate antibiotic (azithromycin, erythromycin, clarithromycin, and trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole) without **waiting for laboratory confirmation.**
- If treatment is deferred pending test results, instruct the patient not to return to school, work, or congregate activity until confirmed negative, even if clinical suspicion is low.
- Ensure that patients complete at least 5 days of antibiotic treatment before returning to school, work, etc.
- Ascertain that household members and close contacts of pertussis cases receive antibiotic chemoprophylaxis, regardless of the contacts' immunization status.
- **Ensure and encourage pertussis vaccination** amongst all eligible patients, and ensure that household contact(s) of suspected or confirmed cases are up-to-date with pertussis vaccination.
- Report any suspect cases within one working day case or suspect case is diagnosed, treated, or detected. **Do NOT wait for laboratory confirmation.** Report any suspect cases within one working day by faxing a report to 520-838-7538. For questions, call 520-724-7797, 24 hours a day and ask to speak to an epidemiologist. The updated case reporting form is available at: <http://azdhs.gov/providerreporting>

Additional resources regarding clinical presentation, treatment, specimen collection, and disease reporting is available anytime by clicking on "Disease Control" at www.pima.gov