



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

NEIL ABERCROMBIE
GOVERNOR

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**DOH URGES PREGNANT WOMEN, FAMILY MEMBERS,
AND CAREGIVERS OF INFANTS TO GET VACCINATED
AGAINST PERTUSSIS**

New statewide campaign underway

HONOLULU – The Hawaii State Department of Health (DOH) Immunization Branch is launching a statewide educational campaign in conjunction with National Infant Immunization Week (April 20-27, 2013). The campaign, targeting pregnant women, family members, and caregivers, urges those who will have close contact with newborns and infants to get vaccinated against pertussis (also known as whooping cough). A combination of Internet marketing and print materials, distributed through immunization providers, preschools, and local businesses, will be used to promote the campaign's message to the public.

“Although parents are doing a good job ensuring their children are vaccinated on-time, we are most concerned about newborns and infants younger than two months because they’re too young to be vaccinated themselves,” said State Health Director Loretta Fuddy. “We are encouraging family members and caregivers to protect themselves to keep from transmitting the disease to our youngest and most vulnerable keiki.”

The campaign uses the image of a tiny infant in a nursery protected by a security guard who is standing next to a red stop sign that reads, “NO PERTUSSIS VACCINATION – NO ENTRY.” The baby’s crib is cordoned off and the security guard displays a bandage on his muscular arm showing he has been vaccinated for pertussis. The campaign materials also read, “Pertussis (whooping cough) is a deadly disease that threatens your infant.”

(more)

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Pertussis is very contagious and can cause serious, even fatal illness — especially in infants who are too young to be fully vaccinated. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease and Prevention (CDC), more than 41,000 cases of pertussis were provisionally reported across the United States during 2012, including 18 deaths. The majority of deaths occurred among infants younger than 3 months of age. Preliminary data estimate 73 cases of pertussis in Hawaii were reported to DOH in 2012.

In addition to vaccinating those who will come into close contact with infants, pregnant women are now recommended to receive the pertussis vaccine between 27 and 36 weeks gestation.

“Women who are vaccinated during pregnancy transfer protective antibodies to their unborn infant,” said Dr. Sarah Y. Park, Chief of the DOH Disease Outbreak Control Division. “Protection received from the mother during pregnancy can help safeguard newborns and infants until they are old enough to be vaccinated themselves.” Women who do not receive the pertussis vaccine during pregnancy should be vaccinated after delivery before they leave the hospital.

“Vaccine protection for pertussis wanes with time so it is important for adolescents and adults to talk to their doctor about a one-time booster dose of pertussis (Tdap) vaccine,” said Ronald Balajadia, Immunization Branch Chief. “We are encouraging everyone to do their part to protect our youngest keiki from this potentially serious disease.”

The vaccine that provides protection against pertussis is administered as a combination vaccine for three diseases: pertussis, diphtheria, and tetanus. A series of five doses are given to children beginning at age two months. According to the 2011 National Immunization Survey, approximately 90 percent of Hawaii’s children aged 19-35 months were up-to-date on their pertussis vaccination.

For more information, talk to your doctor, visit <http://hawaii.gov/health/immunization/index.html>, or call 2-1-1.

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