



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
P. O. BOX 3378
HONOLULU, HI 96801-3378

In reply, please refer to:
File:

May 2, 2019

MEDICAL ADVISORY: PERTUSSIS CLUSTER ON THE ISLAND OF MAUI

Dear Healthcare Provider:

In the past month, the Hawaii Department of Health (DOH) has confirmed four cases of pertussis (whooping cough) among children on the island of Maui. Three of the four cases are unvaccinated and may be epidemiologically associated. None have required hospitalization.

Healthcare providers should be vigilant in identifying potential pertussis cases and ensure all patients are appropriately vaccinated to prevent further spread of this disease. See https://health.hawaii.gov/docd/disease_listing/pertussis/ for current vaccination recommendations for pertussis.

Pertussis cough is initially intermittent and later becomes paroxysmal (multiple, rapid coughs). Inspiratory whoop and posttussive vomiting may also occur. Cough may persist for up to 6 weeks or more. Unvaccinated or incompletely vaccinated infants younger than age 12 months have the highest risk for severe complications and death. In infants, the cough may be minimal or absent, and apnea may be the only symptom. In previously vaccinated persons, the illness may be milder and the characteristic “whoop” absent, and therefore harder to diagnose. Those with mild disease may still transmit infection and are often the source of infection for young children.

If a person suspected of having pertussis presents in your office:

- Promptly isolate to avoid disease transmission and place a mask on the patient.
- For diagnosis, collect a nasopharyngeal swab in viral transport media for PCR, preferably early in the course of illness (within 2–3 weeks of cough onset). Serologic diagnosis is not recommended because of poor sensitivity and specificity.¹
- Early treatment may lessen symptoms and is particularly important in infants. Treat persons older than age 1 year within 3 weeks of cough onset, and infants younger than age 1 year and pregnant women (especially near term) within 6 weeks of cough onset.²
- Post-exposure antimicrobial prophylaxis (PEP) should be considered for all household and close contacts.³ Consult DOH with questions regarding indications for PEP.

¹ For additional information on diagnostic testing, see <https://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/clinical/diagnostic-testing/index.html>.

² Current recommendations and guidelines for pertussis treatment can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/clinical/treatment.html>.

³ For more information regarding PEP, see <https://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/outbreaks/pep.html>.

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Persons with pertussis are infectious from the beginning of the catarrhal stage (runny nose, low-grade fever) through three weeks after the onset of paroxysms, or until they have received 5 full days of effective antimicrobial treatment. Persons with pertussis should be excluded from school/work until completion of 5 days of appropriate antimicrobial therapy. Those who do not receive appropriate antimicrobial therapy should be excluded from school/work for 21 days after onset of symptoms.

Pertussis is an urgently reportable disease. Please report any clinically suspected case of pertussis immediately to:

Oahu (Disease Reporting Line)..... (808) 586-4586
Maui District Health Office..... (808) 984-8213
Kauai District Health Office..... (808) 241-3563
Big Island District Health Office (Hilo)..... (808) 933-0912
Big Island District Health Office (Kona)..... (808) 322-4877
After hours on Oahu..... (808) 600-3625
After hours on neighbor islands.....(800) 360-2575 (toll free)

We appreciate your vigilance and assistance in protecting our communities from the spread of pertussis.

Sincerely,



Sarah Y. Park, MD, FAAP
State Epidemiologist

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