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DOH confirms five cases of whooping cough

HONOLULU – The Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH) has confirmed five cases of pertussis (whooping cough) among members of a single household, including a child who was hospitalized. All five cases were unvaccinated. The family had traveled from the United States mainland and stayed at a hotel accommodation on O'ahu. DOH is coordinating with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other states to notify travelers who were exposed. DOH investigation has identified no close contacts after the family's arrival in Hawai'i.

In the past five years from 2019-2023, there have been 89 confirmed and probable pertussis cases reported in Hawai'i, including 28 cases linked to three outbreaks. Prior to the current case, the last case occurred in March of 2023.

Pertussis, also known as whooping cough, is a highly contagious respiratory infection caused by bacteria. It can cause severe coughing fits (up to 10 weeks or more), followed by a high-pitched "whoop" sound when breathing in.

Whooping cough can lead to serious complications, especially in infants, such as pneumonia, dehydration, seizures, and brain damage. Infants may not cough at all. Instead, they may have apnea (life-threatening pauses in breathing) or struggle to breathe.

The best way to protect you and your loved ones is to stay up to date with recommended whooping cough vaccines. Two vaccines used in the U.S. help prevent whooping cough: DTaP and Tdap. Children younger than 7 years old get DTaP, while older children, teens, and adults get Tdap. Women should get a Tdap vaccine during the third trimester of **each pregnancy** to help protect their baby early in life.

See a doctor as soon as possible if you or your child are:

- Experiencing symptoms, such as runny nose, fever and coughing violently and rapidly
- Struggling to breathe
- Turning blue or purple

If you are diagnosed with whooping cough, take antibiotics as prescribed and avoid contact with others until you are no longer contagious. People can spread the bacteria from the start of the very first [symptoms](#) and for at least two weeks after coughing begins. Taking antibiotics early in the illness may shorten the amount of time someone is contagious. Learn more about [treatment](#).

CDC recommends practicing good hygiene to prevent the spread of the bacteria that cause whooping cough and other respiratory illnesses:

Cover your cough or sneeze:

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Throw away used tissues in the waste basket right away.
- Cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow if you don't have a tissue. Never cough into your hands because you can spread germs this way.

Wash your hands often:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.

For more information about pertussis (whooping cough), please visit the CDC [website](#).

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