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**DOH investigating two confirmed cases of whooping cough on
Hawai'i Island**

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HONOLULU — The Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH) is investigating two confirmed cases of pertussis (also known as whooping cough) and identified eight probable cases in two separate households without travel-related exposures on Hawai'i Island. Both households have school-age children that attend local schools but are in geographically distinct areas of the island. Currently, no one is hospitalized. DOH is working with the families and schools to identify close contacts and encourage them to seek medical attention for preventive care as well as testing if symptomatic.

These confirmed cases follow five previous confirmed cases of whooping cough in O'ahu visitors among a single household in February 2024, which included a child who was hospitalized. The newer cases on Hawai'i Island are not connected with the February cluster. In the past five years from 2019-2023, there were 90 confirmed and probable whooping cough cases reported in Hawai'i, including 28 cases linked to three outbreaks. The last case prior to the currently reported cases in 2024 occurred in October of 2023.

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.

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

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 are DTaP and Tdap. Infants and children are recommended to complete a series of DTaP doses. Adolescents are recommended to receive one dose of Tdap preferably at age 11 or 12 years old. Women should get a Tdap dose during the third trimester of each pregnancy to help protect their babies early in life.

Based on data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Hawai'i's 2022-2023 kindergarten coverage rate for DTaP was 87.0% compared to a national average of 92.7%. Compared to the previous year, Hawai'i had the largest increase in vaccination exemptions.

Staying up to date on routine vaccinations is an effective way of protecting our families and the larger community from outbreaks. Parents who are hesitant about vaccination are encouraged to discuss their concerns with their child's healthcare provider.

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 mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Throw away used tissues in a 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 as germs can be spread this way.
- 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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