



Charlie Crist  
Governor

Ana M. Viamonte Ros, M.D., M.P.H.  
State Surgeon General

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
July 20, 2010

Contact: DOH Communications  
(850) 245-4111

**FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH RECOMMENDS PROTECTING AGAINST  
WHOOPIING COUGH**

**TALLAHASSEE** – The Florida Department of Health (DOH) advises parents, childcare workers and healthcare providers to verify the children they care for are properly immunized against whooping cough (pertussis). It is advisable for new parents, grandparents and relatives to be fully immunized before being around a baby.

Whooping cough—known medically as pertussis—is a highly contagious respiratory tract infection that can be a serious health threat, specifically for infants. Family members are most often the transmission source of pertussis to infants. A typical case of pertussis in children and adults starts with a cough and runny nose that can last for one-to-two weeks, followed by weeks-to-months of rapid coughing fits that sometimes end with a whooping sound. Pertussis is contagious before severe coughing starts.

“Recent reports indicate numerous states are experiencing increases in whooping cough,” said Ana M. Viamonte Ros, M.D., M.P.H., State Surgeon General. “It is important for all people in Florida to discuss the whooping cough immunization or booster with their primary care physician. Immunizations not only help prevent the disease in the immunized individual, but they can help protect those who cannot receive vaccine or may be too young to be fully immunized.”

More than 900 cases of whooping cough have been reported in California this year, including five deaths in infants less than 3 months of age. Risk of death from pertussis is greatest in infants. Florida has 145 reported cases of whooping cough this year, with 23 cases reported in infants less than 3 months of age.

The best way to prevent whooping cough is through immunizations. Infants and children receive a series of 4-5 doses of DTaP, a diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus containing vaccine, with a booster at 10 to 11 years of age. However, protection provided by the childhood series fades over time. All persons age 11-64 can get a booster called Tdap, which protects against whooping cough, tetanus, and diphtheria.

Additional information about immunizations and whooping cough (pertussis) can be found at: <http://www.immunizeFlorida.com/> or <http://www.cdc.gov/Features/Pertussis/>.

###