



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

RSA Tower 201 Monroe Street, Suite 914 Montgomery, AL 36104
Phone 334-206-5300 Fax 334-206-5520

www.adph.org

ADPH investigates pertussis outbreak in East Alabama

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Karen Landers, M.D., F.A.A.P.
(256) 246-1714

In cooperation with the Chambers County School District, the Alabama Department of Public Health's Immunization Division is investigating an outbreak of six laboratory-confirmed cases of pertussis at multiple schools in Chambers County. Pertussis, also known as whooping cough, is a highly contagious respiratory and reportable disease in Alabama.

"Our concern is that children who have been vaccinated have contracted the disease," said Dr. Karen Landers, Assistant State Health Officer with the Alabama Department of Public Health. "We also want to make sure that we take all the necessary steps to follow up fully with those who have been exposed and educate those who may have come in contact with a person currently ill with the disease."

The Immunization Division is taking several steps to ensure that no further residents are affected. Pertussis begins with symptoms such as a runny nose, low-grade fever and cough. After a week or two this illness, symptoms progress to violent coughing which often makes it hard to breathe. After fits of many coughs, someone with the illness often needs to take deep breaths resulting in a "whooping" sound.

Immunization staff is collecting specimens for testing, contacting via phone parents of children who attend schools where exposure has occurred, and providing information for school text blasts to provide further information. Parents who are concerned that their children may be exhibiting symptoms should consult their child's primary physician to be tested for pertussis.

"Although this outbreak of pertussis is affecting a specific age range, residents should be aware that this disease can affect people of all ages. Pertussis is an extremely serious disease, even deadly, for babies less than a year old. The best way to protect against pertussis is by getting vaccinated," said Dr. Landers.

For more information on signs and symptoms of pertussis, or vaccination information, please visit www.adph.org/immunization.