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Whooping cough has been declared an epidemic in the State of California. While there have been no suspected or confirmed cases of Whooping Cough (Pertussis) in Glenn County, children should be vaccinated against the disease and parents, family members and caregivers of infants need a booster shot.

As of June 15, California had recorded 910 cases of pertussis, a four-fold increase from the same period last year when 219 cases were recorded. Five infants — all under three months of age — have died from the disease this year in California. In addition, 600 more possible cases of pertussis are being investigated by local health departments throughout California.

The pertussis vaccine is safe for children and adults. Pertussis vaccination begins at two months of age, but young infants are not adequately protected until the initial series of three shots is complete at 6 months of age. The series of shots that most children receive wears off by the time they finish middle school. Neither vaccination nor illness from pertussis provides lifetime immunity.

Pregnant women may be vaccinated against pertussis before pregnancy, during pregnancy or after giving birth. Fathers may be vaccinated at any time, but preferably before the birth of their baby.

Others who may have contact with infants, including family members, healthcare workers, and childcare workers, should also be vaccinated. Individuals may contact their regular health care provider or local health department at 934-6588 or 865-6735 to inquire about pertussis vaccination.

Pertussis is a highly contagious disease, a typical case of pertussis in children and adults starts with a cough and runny nose for one-to-two weeks, followed by weeks to months of rapid coughing fits that sometimes end with a whooping sound. Fever is rare.

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