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# Press Release

# NEWS

*Burlington County*  
*Board of Chosen Freeholders*  
*Mount Holly, NJ 08060*  
*Office of Public Information*  
*Phone 609-265-5028/Fax 609-265-5151*  
*www.co.burlington.nj.us*



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Holly Cucuzzella

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(609) 265-5548

## **PARENTS URGED TO GET VACCINATED TO PROTECT INFANTS**

### **Health Department Promotes Tdap Vaccine To Ward Off Whooping Cough**

Public health officials in Burlington County are marking National Infant Immunization Week (NIIW), April 21-28, 2012, to highlight the importance of protecting infants from vaccine-preventable diseases such as pertussis, also known as whooping cough.

“Immunization is a shared responsibility. Families, healthcare professionals, and public health officials must work together to help protect the entire community,” said Burlington County Freeholder Mary Ann O’Brien.

Public Health officials recommend pertussis vaccination for all persons who have contact with infants. This includes parents, siblings, grandparents, babysitters, daycare personnel and all others who have contact with infants.

Vaccinating family members as well as infants is a health strategy referred to as “cocooning,” or putting a protective cocoon of immunity around the infant. Investigations into cases of pertussis in infants have revealed that 50% of the time, the infants caught the infection from their parents.

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## **PRESS RELEASE: Infant Immunization – 4/24/12 – Add One**

Pertussis is highly contagious and can infect people of any age. However, infants are the most vulnerable to pertussis because they are too young to receive the vaccine and their lungs are still developing. And, unfortunately, only six percent of adults in the United States are vaccinated for pertussis.

Health officials have seen a resurgence in Pertussis over the last several years. In California, 10 infants died from a pertussis outbreak in 2010. So far this year, 640 cases have been reported in 23 Washington State counties as of March 31st. This compares to 94 cases during this same period last year, putting Washington on-pace to have the highest number of reported cases in decades.

Adolescents and adults need a Tdap vaccination every five years. The goal is to educate the community on the importance of getting a Tdap vaccination to protect infants from contracting pertussis and preventing infant deaths from the disease.

Vaccines are among the most successful and cost-effective public health tools available for preventing disease or even death. The shots not only help protect vaccinated individuals, but also help protect entire communities by preventing and reducing the spread of infectious diseases.

Giving babies the recommended immunizations by age two is the best way to protect them from 14 serious childhood diseases, like pertussis, whooping cough and measles. For more information about childhood vaccination schedules, individuals should contact their health care providers. Individuals that currently do not have health insurance can contact Southern Jersey Family Medical Centers at 609-894-1100 or <http://www.sjfmc.org/>.

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