
Press Release

NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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VACCINE OFFERED TO PARENTS TO PROTECT INFANTS

Health Department Offers Free Vaccine to Parents and Caregivers of Infants

The Burlington County Health Department is making Tdap (Tetanus, diphtheria, acellular pertussis) vaccine available to immunize all persons who have close contacts with infants.

The vaccine is being offered free of charge, while supplies last, and parents and caregivers are encouraged to make an appointment to be vaccinated by calling the Burlington County Health Department at (609) 265-5528.

.Pertussis is more familiarly known as whooping cough – a highly contagious respiratory disease.

“Infants less than 12 months of age have a high risk of pertussis-related complications, hospitalizations and death. Vaccinating adult contacts may reduce the risk of transmitting pertussis to infants,” said Jennifer Horner, epidemiologist for the Health Department.

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

Vaccinating these individuals is part and parcel to a strategy known as “cocooning,” -- that is, 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. Therefore, vaccinating parents for pertussis is an important way to protect the infants.

Currently, there is an outbreak of pertussis in California where they are reporting twice as many cases as last year this time and tragically several infant deaths. New Jersey has several hundred cases of pertussis every year with Burlington County typically seeing 10 to 20 cases.

The vaccine was made available through the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act of 2009. For more information on pertussis and the Tdap vaccine please visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov.

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