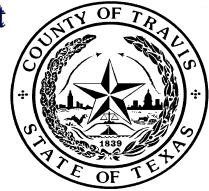




## Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services Department

Division of the Medical Director  
Epidemiology and Disease Surveillance Unit  
15 Waller Street  
Austin, TX 78702



January 7, 2010

To: All Travis County Healthcare Physicians and Providers:

We want to increase your awareness regarding the ongoing pertussis situation in Travis County and recent changes in the epidemiologic pattern. In November/December, 2009, the Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services Department (ATCHHSD) identified 140 confirmed and probable pertussis cases and we are currently investigating an additional 94 suspect pertussis cases. The demographics of these newer cases differ from cases that were reported earlier last year.

- Pertussis cases are now being identified in younger, high risk age groups (age range from 2 weeks through 4 years). In April and May 2009 the predominant ages reported were between 7 to 11 years of age with occasional cases under 1 year of age.
- Cluster outbreaks are occurring in childcare centers and in elementary schools (both public and private) located in both southern and northern Travis County whereas previous outbreaks were occurring predominantly in northern Travis County.
- PCR positive lab-confirmed results are now being seen in vaccinated children presenting with mild symptoms.

The ATCHHSD has issued pertussis recommendations to 13 schools and daycares during the months of November and December.

ATCHHSD provides written recommendations to a school or daycare when the following 3 conditions are met:

- An individual that attends the school or daycare is identified with a PCR positive lab result for pertussis
- A case-patient with pertussis was present at the facility during the period of communicability. Cases are highly communicable in the early catarrhal stage and at the beginning of the paroxysmal cough stage (first 2 weeks). Thereafter, communicability gradually decreases and becomes negligible in about 3 weeks, despite persisting spasmodic cough with whoop. When treated with erythromycin, clarithromycin or azithromycin, patients are no longer contagious after 5 days of treatment. The paroxysmal cough routinely presents 5 to 7 days into illness. The ATCHHSD considers patients no longer contagious after 21 days from onset of cough or after completion of 5 days of antibiotic treatment.
- A case-patient with pertussis was present at the facility and infectious within the prior 21 days (post-exposure prophylaxis will benefit other exposed individuals).

**Action Requested:** The ATCHHSD would like you to increase your clinical suspicion for pertussis in the differential diagnosis when appropriate – including in evaluation of immunized patients with mild illness. If you clinically suspect pertussis, especially if epidemiologically linked to a confirmed case, please consider appropriate pertussis treatment during that initial visit even before obtaining the lab results. Also, please make extra effort to insure that all patients are up-to-date on their immunizations. For further questions please contact the Epidemiology and Disease Surveillance Unit at (512) 972-5555.