



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

Students must have Tdap vaccine to protect against highly contagious pertussis

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Winkler Sims

Tracey England

(334) 206-5023

Pertussis, or whooping cough, is a highly contagious and sometimes fatal bacterial disease which has increased alarmingly in the past decade. To help provide protection, all students 11 years of age and older entering the sixth grade in Alabama schools during the 2013-2014 school year are required to have a tetanus-diphtheria-acellular pertussis (Tdap) vaccine.

The Tdap vaccine helps to protect adolescents from pertussis which will prevent spreading the disease to family members, other students and school staff.

Students entering the seventh, eighth and ninth grades during the 2013-2014 school year who did not receive the Tdap vaccination during the 2012-2013 school year are also required to have the vaccination.

All students attending public and private schools are required to have an up-to-date certificate of immunization.

The Tdap school requirement will go up by one higher grade each school year. For example, Tdap is required for students entering sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth grades in 2013-2014, sixth through tenth grades in 2014-2015, and up through twelfth grade in 2016-2017.

"Of the 212 reported cases of pertussis in 2012, school-aged children represented 33 percent of the cases," said Dr. Mary McIntyre, Assistant State Health Officer for Disease Control and Prevention. "The sixth through ninth grade requirement for students age 11 or older will protect students from pertussis at the adolescent age in school and through the remainder of their school experience."

The number of reported pertussis cases in Alabama in all ages continues to be of concern with 205 cases in 2010, 133 cases in 2011, and 212 cases in 2012. During the first six months of 2013 there have been 73 reported cases of pertussis in the state.

Pertussis is a bacterial infection of the lungs and spreads from person to person through moisture droplets in the air, probably from coughs or sneezes. A person with pertussis develops a severe cough that usually lasts four to six weeks or longer.

Contact your private physician or local county health department regarding Tdap vaccinations.

For more information contact the Immunization Division at (334) 206-5023 or 1-800-469-4599.

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7/9/13