



## NEWS RELEASE

### ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

RSA Tower 201 Monroe Street, Suite 914 Montgomery, AL 36104

Phone 334-206-5300 Fax 334-206-5534

[www.adph.org](http://www.adph.org)

---

## Highly contagious pertussis re-emerges; required Tdap vaccine protects against it

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

#### CONTACT:

Tracey England  
(334) 206-5023

Pertussis is a highly contagious and sometimes fatal bacterial disease which has increased alarmingly in the past decade. To help provide protection, all students 11 and older entering the sixth grade in Alabama schools this school year must have a tetanus-diphtheria-acellular pertussis (Tdap) vaccine.

Each pupil 11 or older who enters the sixth grade will be required to have a new certificate of immunization. This is because of the change from tetanus-diphtheria (Td) to (Tdap) vaccine.

The Tdap vaccine will protect adolescents from pertussis and keep them from spreading disease to siblings, other family members and other students. The Tdap school requirement will go up by one higher grade each school year. For example, Tdap will be required for students entering seventh grade in 2011-2012, eighth grade in 2012-2013, up through twelfth grade in 2016-2017.

“Adolescents have one of the highest rates of pertussis cases,” said Winkler Sims, director of the Immunization Division of the Alabama Department of Public Health. “The new sixth grade requirement for students age 11 or older will protect students from pertussis at the adolescent age in school and will protect them through the remainder of their school experience.”

The number of reported pertussis (whooping cough) cases in Alabama in all ages has increased from 68 in 2008 to 315 in 2009. Already in the first six months of 2010 there have been 93 reported cases of pertussis.

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 for clinic times for Tdap vaccinations.

For more information contact the Immunization Division at 1-800-469-4599.

-30-

7/21/10