



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Students must have Tdap vaccine to protect against highly contagious pertussis

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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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 2012-2013 school year are required to have a tetanus-diphtheria-acellular pertussis (Tdap) vaccine.

Students entering the seventh and eighth grades during the 2012-2013 school year who did not receive the Tdap vaccination during the 2011-2012 school year are required to have the vaccination.

All students including those 11 years of age or older entering the sixth, seventh and eighth grades are required to have an up-to-date certificate of immunization.

The Tdap vaccine helps to protect adolescents from pertussis which will prevent spreading the disease to family members, other students and school staff. The Tdap school requirement will go up by one higher grade each school year. For example, Tdap is required for students entering sixth, seventh and eighth grades in 2012-2013, sixth through ninth grades in 2013-2014, and 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 sixth through eighth 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 and 133 cases in 2011. During the first six months of 2012 there have been 69 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 1-800-469-4599.

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