

New Rule Before School! Whooping Cough Vaccine Now Required for 7th-12th Grade Students

San Mateo County- Beginning July 1, 2011, all students entering grades 7-12 must provide proof of having immunization against whooping cough ('Tdap') before starting school. In light of California's recent whooping cough (also known as pertussis) epidemic, there is no reason to wait for the new school year.

"It's important that incoming 7th-12th graders see their doctor and get immunized", said Scott Morrow, M.D. "Getting Tdap now will not only meet the new school requirement, but it will also protect our children from the constant threat of pertussis."

This new school requirement applies to all public and private schools. California's parents are being urged not to wait for the new fall school year, since there will be no grace period. Under the new law, students will not be allowed to start school without proof of vaccination.

"Scheduling an appointment right before the beginning of the school year may be difficult," said Scott Morrow, M.D. "It's important that parents immunize their children right away and prevent them from getting behind in school."

In addition to Tdap, there are several important vaccines recommended for preteens and teens including the meningococcal vaccine, a second chickenpox shot (if they never had chickenpox disease), and the HPV vaccine series. Everyone older than 6 months old is also recommended to receive seasonal flu vaccine.

If a child does not have health insurance, or is only partially insured, the doctor or your local health department can provide information about the Vaccines for Children Program, which provides free or low-cost vaccines.

For more information, please visit www.ShotsforSchool.org. You can also contact San Mateo County Health Department at (650) 573-2877 or PVSD Nurse Abbe Keane at (650) 851-1777 x2253.