

**April 24, 2025**

## **MCHD alerts community to Pertussis outbreak primarily affecting school-aged children**

MOBILE, Ala. — The Mobile County Health Department (MCHD) is alerting residents to an outbreak of Pertussis, also known as whooping cough, primarily affecting school-aged children between the ages of 5 and 17. Many individuals diagnosed during this outbreak had received the full five-dose DTaP vaccination series in childhood, suggesting that waning immunity may be contributing to the spread of the disease.

“Mobile County has had a number of cases of Pertussis over the past couple of weeks, which brings our 2025 total to 52. Last year, we had seven cases in the county,” said Dr. Kevin Michaels, Health Officer for Mobile County.

Pertussis is a highly contagious respiratory infection caused by the bacterium *Bordetella pertussis*. It begins with mild cold-like symptoms and progresses to severe and persistent coughing fits that can last for weeks. These coughing episodes may be accompanied by vomiting, difficulty breathing, or a characteristic "whooping" sound when inhaling. Although Pertussis can affect individuals of any age, certain groups are more vulnerable to serious illness or complications.

Infants under 12 months, especially those too young to complete their initial vaccine series, are among the most at risk. Additional vulnerable populations include pregnant individuals and their newborns, people with chronic respiratory conditions like asthma or COPD, older adults over the age of 65, and individuals with compromised immune systems. These groups may experience more severe outcomes, including hospitalization or death if exposed to the infection.

To protect yourself and those around you, particularly these high-risk populations, MCHD recommends the following vaccination guidance per the CDC:

1. Children aged 11–12 years should receive a Tdap booster as part of the routine immunization schedule.
2. Adolescents aged 13–18 years who have not received Tdap should receive one booster dose immediately.
3. Adults aged 19 and older who never received a Tdap booster should get one dose now, followed by a Td or Tdap booster every 10 years.
4. Pregnant individuals should receive one dose of Tdap during each pregnancy, ideally between 27-weeks and 36-weeks gestation, to help protect their newborn.
5. Parents, caregivers, school staff, and healthcare workers in contact with infants or immunocompromised individuals should confirm their Tdap booster is up to date.

Individuals who are unsure of their vaccination history should contact their healthcare provider to discuss their level of immunity or protection from Pertussis or other vaccine preventable illnesses.

Anyone experiencing symptoms should remain home and consult their healthcare provider immediately.