

## **Focus on the Fourth! Don't Miss Your Baby's 4<sup>th</sup> DTaP Immunization.**

A recent study conducted by Boulder County Public Health's (BCPH) Immunization Program found that only 60% of children in Boulder County were appropriately immunized by 24 months of age. That means 40% of our two-year-olds are vulnerable to diseases like pertussis (whooping cough), measles, mumps, and polio.

The most commonly missed immunization was the fourth dose of DTaP – the combination vaccine that protects against tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis. All children need five DTaP immunizations to be fully protected. The 4<sup>th</sup> dose, given between 12 and 18 months, is the one most often missed.

*Your baby should have a total of five DTaP immunizations, one at each of the following ages:*

- 2 months
- 4 months
- 6 months
- **12-18 months**
- 4-6 years

*The 4<sup>th</sup> dose of DTaP may be administered as early as 12 months of age, provided that six months have elapsed since the 3<sup>d</sup> dose was given.*

Pertussis is on the rise in Colorado, with Boulder County accounting for 7-14% of the state's total cases, while representing only 6.1% of Colorado's total population. An average of 61 cases of pertussis have been reported in Boulder County in each of the last 5 years, with 177 cases recorded in 2004.

Often infants who get pertussis have to be hospitalized. Pertussis causes extreme coughing that makes it hard for a child to eat, drink, or breathe. It can cause pneumonia, seizures, brain damage, and even death.

Pertussis is easily spread by coughing or sneezing. Babies usually get pertussis from an adult or older child who is infected, but who may seem to only have a mild cough.

### **What can parents do to make sure their children are protected against pertussis?**

- Obtain a current record of your child's immunizations. If you do not have a record, contact your child's health care provider to get a current copy.
- Look at your child's record and count how many doses of DTaP vaccines have been recorded. For each child over 18 months of age, at least four doses should be recorded.
- If your child has not received four doses of DTaP, contact your health care provider and schedule an appointment to get the 4<sup>th</sup> DTaP vaccine and any other immunizations that might be missing.

**Now there is another step parents can take to protect their young children against pertussis:**

A new vaccine against tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis (Tdap) is now available that protects adults through 64 years of age and children 10 years of age and older. Make sure you, your older children, and any other adults who have close contact with your young child – such as grandparents and caregivers – have received this new vaccine.

Making even these small efforts can protect your children and our community from the serious disease of pertussis.

*Best Shots for Boulder County Kids is contributed by the Boulder County Coalition for Early Childhood Immunization. We invite you to send your questions, comments, or suggestions to Kyla Holcomb at [kholcomb@co.boulder.co.us](mailto:kholcomb@co.boulder.co.us) or 303-413-7506.*