

# Fresno County whooping cough cases rise dramatically

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Barbara Anderson

State and county health officials say cases of pertussis, better known as whooping cough, are on the rise this year and another peak like the epidemic seen five years ago could be underway.

So far, California has reported 1,711 cases from January through April, more than triple the number of cases for the same time last year.

Two infants have died -- one in Riverside and another in Placer County. They mark the first reported deaths from the respiratory disease since 2010.

In Fresno County, 121 cases have been reported thus far, compared to 41 cases last year.

Pertussis is a cyclical respiratory disease, and Friday state health officials said it peaks every three to five years. It was epidemic in California in 2010: The state reported 9,159 cases and 10 deaths; Fresno County reported 550 cases and one death.

"As the last peak in California was in 2010, we are concerned that the recent increase in reported cases suggests that another cyclical peak is beginning," said Dr. Ron Chapman, the state's health officer.

Pertussis typically starts with a cough and runny nose in children and worsens into a whooping sound.

A vaccine for pertussis is recommended for pregnant women, infants and adults who are in contact with infants, or if they are health care workers who come in contact with pregnant women or infants. California requires seventh-graders to have a pertussis vaccine booster.

The reporter can be reached at (559) 441-6310, [banderson@fresnobee.com](mailto:banderson@fresnobee.com) or [@beehealthwriter](https://twitter.com/beehealthwriter) on Twitter.