Whooping Cough On the Rise

By Ishani Ganguli, ABC News

No longer a distant memory from the Great Depression, whooping cough has made an alarming resurgence in the United States. Current infant vaccinations may no longer be sufficient protection against the disease to be able to afford protection. The government is now considering a booster shot to help fight the often deadly illness.

Whooping cough, or pertussis, is a highly contagious bacterial infection characterized by violent coughing fits, gasps for air that resemble "whoop" sounds, and vomiting. The syndrome is more common among infants and the elderly, and while it is available to prevent spread of the disease, "it won't shorten the illness in the person already infected," says Todd Murphy, a medical epidemiologist at the Center for Disease Control (CDC). Complications from the disease include pneumonias, herpes, and lung damage.

While incidence of this disease doubled following development of the vaccine in the 1940s, numbers have been steadily increasing since the 1970's. A preliminary CDC count estimated over 10,000 pertussis cases in the period prior to review of non-routine laboratory reports from the previous year and the highest reported in thirty years. While traditionally seen in 1 year olds, whooping cough is now being seen in children up to 10 years old. Likely sources are New Hampshire and Vermont in Ohio and Pennsylvania.

Although a lot of babies will be in young children, while older patients generally recover, they are the major source of infection for vulnerable infants. According to an CDC report, the disease is most prevalent in the fall and winter of 2009 when over 11,000 pertussis cases in the past year, an increase of over two thousand from the previous year.

The most recent figures from the CDC show that, from 2002-2003, only about 83% of infants were vaccinated against pertussis. "So there is room for improvement," says Dr. John Modlin, Chair of Pediatrics at Dartmouth Medical School. And officials now realize the need for added immunization for young children, pre-school children, and even pre-teens.

Indeed, the latest figures from Canada, Germany, and Australia currently have this kind of protocol in place. The government is now considering a booster shot to help fight the often deadly illness. The vaccine series; concerns that this may contribute to the resurgence have prompted the U.S. government to look at a new option: a booster shot for adolescents. Canada, Germany, and Italy have introduced a fourth dose of vaccine for young adults as well.

According to an agency and school-based health officials, the latest figures from the CDC show that, from 2002-2003, only about 83% of infants were vaccinated against pertussis. "So there is room for improvement," says Dr. John Modlin, Chair of Pediatrics at Dartmouth Medical School. And officials now realize the need for added immunization for young children, pre-school children, and even pre-teens.

"Whooping cough is the only vaccine-preventable disease that has not been completely controlled by routine childhood immunization," according to Dr. Paul Offit, chief of infectious disease at Children's Hospital (the institution that produced the vaccine). And because it is less severe in older individuals—not much more than a bad cough—it can follow suit by targeting adults as well.

France, and Australia currently have this kind of protocol in place. Canada, Germany, and Italy have introduced a fourth dose of vaccine for young adults as well.

However, "Whooping cough is the only vaccine-preventable disease that has not been completely controlled by routine childhood immunization," according to Dr. Paul Offit, chief of infectious disease at Children's Hospital "Team Rodeo". A Southern Paramedic will offer information to parents about the disease.

The vaccine series is no longer a distant memory from the Great Depression. Whooping cough has made an alarming resurgence in the United States. Current infant vaccinations may no longer be sufficient protection against the disease to be able to afford protection. The government is now considering a booster shot to help fight the often deadly illness.

According to an agency and school-based health officials, the latest figures from the CDC show that, from 2002-2003, only about 83% of infants were vaccinated against pertussis. "So there is room for improvement," says Dr. John Modlin, Chair of Pediatrics at Dartmouth Medical School. And officials now realize the need for added immunization for young children, pre-school children, and even pre-teens.

Indeed, the latest figures from Canada, Germany, and Australia currently have this kind of protocol in place. The government is now considering a booster shot to help fight the often deadly illness. The vaccine series; concerns that this may contribute to the resurgence have prompted the U.S. government to look at a new option: a booster shot for adolescents. Canada, Germany, and Italy have introduced a fourth dose of vaccine for young adults as well.

However, "Whooping cough is the only vaccine-preventable disease that has not been completely controlled by routine childhood immunization," according to Dr. Paul Offit, chief of infectious disease at Children's Hospital "Team Rodeo". A Southern Paramedic will offer information to parents about the disease.

The vaccine series is no longer a distant memory from the Great Depression. Whooping cough has made an alarming resurgence in the United States. Current infant vaccinations may no longer be sufficient protection against the disease to be able to afford protection. The government is now considering a booster shot to help fight the often deadly illness. The vaccine series; concerns that this may contribute to the resurgence have prompted the U.S. government to look at a new option: a booster shot for adolescents. Canada, Germany, and Italy have introduced a fourth dose of vaccine for young adults as well.

However, "Whooping cough is the only vaccine-preventable disease that has not been completely controlled by routine childhood immunization," according to Dr. Paul Offit, chief of infectious disease at Children's Hospital "Team Rodeo". A Southern Paramedic will offer information to parents about the disease.