With 1,026 cases and counting, Colorado's pertussis epidemic has topped the 1,000 case mark, state health officials confirmed Monday, Oct. 22. Pertussis is commonly referred to as whooping cough.

"Whooping cough cases continue to mount in Colorado, and every new case is a reminder that we need to ensure everyone is up to date on their whooping cough immunizations," said Dr. Rachel Herlihy, director of the Immunization Section at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.

"It's especially important for those who have contact with young children, who are more vulnerable to whooping cough. Childcare workers, health care workers, parents, grandparents and siblings of young children should all make sure they are up to date on their whooping cough vaccinations."

All adults are recommended to receive the whooping cough booster vaccine, Tdap, but few have received it, or even know they should.

Denver (165), Jefferson (154), Adams (151), Arapahoe (128) and Boulder (121) counties had the most whooping cough cases, at last count. While the increase in pertussis cases is most prevalent on Colorado's Front Range, increases have been seen statewide. The case counts are from Jan. 1 through Oct. 6.

This is the worst year in Colorado for whooping cough since 2005 when the state had 1,383 cases. Over the past five years Colorado has averaged 324 cases per year. Whooping cough cases tend to peak every three to five years. "Pertussis is a very serious disease that can be deadly when it infects infants, so we are grateful that so far we have not had any whooping cough deaths this year," Herlihy said.

Individuals with pertussis should avoid contact with others until they have taken five full days of an appropriate antibiotic. This recommendation is especially important for children who are in school and could infect their classmates if they return too soon. In addition, people in close contacts of a case of pertussis should receive a course of antibiotics to prevent becoming sick

themselves or infecting others.

For more information on whooping cough, go to http://1.usa.gov/V58r7M .

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