

## **Jennifer Lopez Joins the Fight Against Pertussis in New PSAs**

*Singer, actress and mother teams up with the March of Dimes and sanofi pasteur to launch national whooping cough education campaign*

**WHITE PLAINS, N.Y. and SWIFTWATER, Pa., April 22, 2009** While most parents can't wait to hear their baby's first babbles and coos, there's a first sound that actress, singer and mother Jennifer Lopez is betting no parents ever want to hear - the sound of their baby with pertussis, more commonly known as whooping cough. Ms. Lopez has joined the March of Dimes and sanofi pasteur, the vaccines division of the sanofi-aventis Group, to create a national public awareness campaign called "Sounds of Pertussis."

The new initiative focuses on educating new parents and their families about pertussis, a highly contagious and potentially deadly disease for infants. The campaign's centerpiece is a series of television and radio public service announcements (PSAs) featuring Ms. Lopez that are available in both English and Spanish. The PSAs, scheduled to begin airing nationally this month, encourage new and expectant parents to help protect their babies by making sure that anyone who is, or will be, in close contact with a young infant has been vaccinated against pertussis.

"When I learned that many babies who get pertussis catch it from their parents, and how easy it is for adults to get vaccinated, I was shocked," said Ms. Lopez. "New and expectant parents have so many things to worry about. Getting pertussis themselves, or possibly spreading the disease to their own children, shouldn't be one of them. I felt it was urgent to let parents know how important it is that they get vaccinated against pertussis to protect themselves and to help keep their babies safe from this dangerous disease," she added.

### **Pertussis Makes a Comeback**

Between 2000-2003 and 2004-2007, there was a 100 percent increase in reported cases of pertussis. Estimates indicate that there may be as many as 800,000 to 3.3 million total adult and adolescent cases of pertussis in any given year.

Pertussis is highly contagious and is caused by bacteria which are spread through airborne droplets from the nose and throat. So a cough, sneeze or even talking very close could lead to exposure. In adults, symptoms are usually milder than those found in infants, and pertussis is often mistaken for the common cold or bronchitis. In infants and some adults, pertussis causes severe coughing characterized by the unforgettable "whoop" sound made when gasping for breath after a coughing fit. It creates a sticky, thick mucous that makes it difficult to eat, drink and breathe. The coughing fits can be so violent that infants cannot catch their breath and may turn blue. Pertussis can also lead to other serious complications such as pneumonia, which can require hospitalization. In recent years, 90 percent of pertussis deaths have occurred in infants younger than four months of age.

Because Hispanic babies may be at a higher risk for contracting pertussis, and the risk of dying from pertussis may be higher in Hispanic infants than in non-Hispanic infants, the program is being implemented as a bilingual educational initiative.

"We're very pleased to be working with Ms. Lopez and sanofi pasteur on a campaign that continues the March of Dimes' tradition of championing the health of all babies," said Alan R. Fleischman, M.D., senior vice president and medical director for the March of Dimes. "Pertussis is still prevalent in the U.S. despite routine childhood immunization. Educating parents about the importance of vaccinating themselves and their families to reduce their risk of contracting pertussis and possibly spreading this dangerous disease to infants is an important step in trying to reverse this trend."

### **Protecting Against Pertussis**

While most infants are given routine diphtheria, tetanus and acellular pertussis (DTaP) immunizations, they do not begin the primary series until they are two months of age and may not be fully protected until they have completed their primary series of vaccinations with three or four doses. During this time, they are vulnerable to pertussis. Accordingly, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that all adults and adolescents 11-64 years of age, especially those who have close contact with an infant, be immunized with a tetanus, diphtheria and acellular pertussis (Tdap) booster. The CDC also recommends that new mothers get the Tdap vaccination in the immediate postpartum period to protect themselves from pertussis and reduce the risk for exposing their infants to the disease.

Adults who received vaccinations when they were children may mistakenly believe that they are still protected against pertussis, but immunity wears off over 5 to 10 years, leaving them vulnerable to contracting and spreading the disease.

"Despite the CDC recommendations, a 2007 survey showed that fewer than two percent of adults 18 through 64 years of age had ever received a Tdap vaccination," said Dr. Fleischman. "It is our goal with this campaign to ensure that all new parents are aware of pertussis and that they speak with their health-care providers about getting vaccinated."

### **Sounds of Pertussis**

The "Sounds of Pertussis" campaign includes specific elements designed to reach the Hispanic population, which is the fastest growing and largest minority in the U.S. All of the PSAs have been created in both English and Spanish, and the campaign also includes a four-part radio novela that will air on Spanish-language radio stations throughout the country.

In addition to educational brochures, the campaign includes components to directly engage parents in helping to educate their friends and families about pertussis prevention for themselves and the babies in their lives. These components include a recorded telephone message and e-mails featuring Jennifer Lopez available for sharing on the campaign Web site. The video PSA also will also be available online for downloading and sharing.

Parents and other caregivers can learn more about pertussis, hear the sound of pertussis, send "Sounds of Pertussis" e-mails to friends and family and view the PSAs by visiting [www.SoundsofPertussis.com](http://www.SoundsofPertussis.com).

### **March for Babies®**

As part of the "Sounds of Pertussis" campaign, Ms. Lopez is acting as the Honorary Chairperson of the March of Dimes March for Babies 2009 walks, and sanofi pasteur is a national sponsor of the March. The March for Babies takes place the weekend of April 25-26 in more than 900 communities in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Money raised by March for Babies supports community programs that help moms have healthy, full-term pregnancies; fund research to help babies begin healthy lives; and provide support to families of babies in newborn intensive care.

"Sounds of Pertussis" booths will be stationed at walks in 25 major cities to help raise awareness of pertussis disease and prevention. These booths will offer information and giveaways to walk participants, as well as continuously show the new PSA. Information about the walks can be found at [www.marchforbabies.org](http://www.marchforbabies.org).

### **About March of Dimes**

The March of Dimes is the leading organization for pregnancy and baby health. With chapters nationwide and its premier event, March for Babies, the March of Dimes works to improve the health of babies by preventing birth defects, premature birth and infant mortality. For the latest resources and information, visit [www.marchofdimes.com](http://www.marchofdimes.com) or [www.nacersano.org](http://www.nacersano.org).

March of Dimes and sanofi pasteur are working together on "Sounds of Pertussis" to help protect the health and wellness of adults and infants. For additional information about pertussis and immunization, and the relationship between sanofi pasteur and the March of Dimes, please visit [www.SoundsofPertussis.com](http://www.SoundsofPertussis.com). The March of Dimes does not endorse specific products or brands.

### **About sanofi-aventis**

Sanofi-aventis, a leading global pharmaceutical company, discovers, develops and distributes therapeutic solutions to improve the lives of everyone. Sanofi-aventis is listed in Paris (EURONEXT: SAN) and in New York (NYSE: SNY).

Sanofi Pasteur, the vaccines division of sanofi-aventis Group, provided more than 1.6 billion doses of vaccine in 2008, making it possible to immunize more than 500 million people across the globe. A world leader in the vaccine industry, sanofi pasteur offers the broadest range of vaccines protecting against 20 infectious diseases. The company's heritage, to create vaccines that protect life, dates back more than a century. Sanofi Pasteur is the largest company entirely dedicated to vaccines. Every day, the company invests more than EUR1 million in research and development. For more information, please visit: [www.sanofipasteur.com](http://www.sanofipasteur.com) or [www.sanofipasteur.us](http://www.sanofipasteur.us).