

PERTUSSIS (WHOOPIING COUGH) FACT SHEET

Pertussis (whooping cough) is a highly infectious and usually mild illness that is easily transmitted through coughing and sneezing and may last for several months. Symptoms of pertussis may appear 5 to 10 days following exposure but can take up to 21 days to develop. The first symptoms of pertussis are similar to those of a common cold: a runny nose, low-grade fever and a mild occasional cough for at least 2 weeks, which can become severe and spasmodic--with a distinctive “whooping” sound--and may trigger vomiting after a coughing episode. Even though the disease may be milder in older children, adolescents, and adults, **those who are infected may unknowingly transmit the disease to other vulnerable persons, including unimmunized or incompletely immunized infants.**

With rising disease activity nationally and locally, **the DuPage County Health Department (DCHD) continues to receive reports of pertussis (whooping cough) cases**, with many cases occurring in children and adolescents. **We appreciate your cooperation and vigilance toward early detection, treatment, and prevention of pertussis cases, particularly in school settings among students.**

Most people recover completely from pertussis, **but complications from the disease can be severe and possibly life-threatening in high-risk groups, especially infants under one year**, and children who have not been fully immunized against the disease.

Students or staff who exhibit any of the symptoms of pertussis should contact their healthcare provider to arrange for prompt testing and appropriate treatment with antibiotics. Patients with pertussis **must be isolated from day care, school, work, and public gatherings until at least 5 days after the start of appropriate antibiotic therapy.**

DCHD recommends **all individuals potentially exposed** to a person with pertussis (e.g., in a classroom, sports team, extra-curricular activity, carpool, etc.), regardless of vaccination status, be informed to **monitor for onset of pertussis signs and symptoms for 21 days** and if symptoms develop, seek medical care for prompt testing and appropriate treatment alongside self-isolation to prevent further spread. [Post-exposure prophylaxis \(PEP\)](#) is recommended for household and other high-risk contacts of a pertussis case, and may be considered in consultation with your healthcare provider and DCHD.

Since infants, children and adults are best protected from pertussis by immunizations, please review the immunization records of your child as well as your own. Students and staff who have not received all recommended shots should contact your healthcare provider to arrange for the following immunizations: **1) infants and young children should receive a series of DTaP vaccines in their first 5 years of life**, and **2) adolescents and adults should receive a single Tdap vaccine at 11 years of age or older**, followed by either a Td or Tdap booster every 10 years. Expectant mothers should receive Tdap **during each pregnancy**, preferably at 27 through 36 weeks.

In addition, frequent [handwashing](#) and [respiratory hygiene](#) (e.g., covering your cough, coughing into tissues, disposing of tissues promptly) are important practices that help to limit the spread of this and other similar infections.

If you or your healthcare provider have any further questions, please contact the DuPage County Health Department at (630) 221-7553. More information on pertussis disease and vaccination is available at: www.cdc.gov/pertussis/index.html. Thank you for your time and cooperation, and best wishes for a healthy and productive academic year.

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