



## BIG BEAVER FALLS AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

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DONNA M. NUGENT, Ed.D

Superintendent of Schools

October 23, 2024

Dear BBFASD Parents & Guardians,

The PA Department of Health has shared with us that there is an increase in cases of Pertussis (Whooping Cough) in the community and surrounding areas. We have received notification of one (1) confirmed case at the High School. Due to this information, we are sharing general information with all families and will not be sending specific communication if we have additional cases.

Pertussis is a highly contagious disease that is spread through the air when an infected person sneezes or coughs. Pertussis begins with cold symptoms and a cough which becomes much worse over 1-2 weeks. Symptoms usually include a long series of coughs ("coughing fits") followed by a whooping noise. However, older children, adults and very young infants may not develop the whoop. People with pertussis may have a series of coughs followed by vomiting, turning blue, or difficulty catching their breath. The cough is often worse at night and cough medicines usually do not help alleviate the cough. The disease can be very severe and, although deaths are rare, they do occur especially in infants less than one year of age.

The Pennsylvania Department of Health strongly recommends the following:

- If you/your child is coughing, you may consider contacting your child's doctor. Your child's doctor may obtain a nasopharyngeal culture to test for pertussis and your child should remain at home until the results have come back.
- Your child will be able to return to school after completing the first 5 days of the medication. It is very important that upon returning to school your child continues taking his or her medication until completed.
- If you/your child are/is diagnosed with pertussis, all household members and other close contacts should also be treated with antibiotics regardless of their age or vaccination status.

Making sure that children receive all their shots on time is the best way to control pertussis in the future. In children, diphtheria, tetanus and acellular pertussis vaccine (DTaP) is only given to those under age 7 years of age. Children should receive one dose of DTaP vaccine at 2 months, 4 months, 6 months, and between 15-18 months of age. In addition, one dose is needed before starting school (on or after the 4<sup>th</sup> birthday). Check with your pediatrician to see if your child is eligible for another dose of DTaP in the accelerated schedule. If you are not sure your child is properly immunized, promptly contact his or her doctor. The combination tetanus, diphtheria and acellular pertussis vaccine (Tdap) is recommended for children ages 7 through 10 (if not fully vaccinated) and adolescents and adults as a one-time dose. It is also recommended during EACH pregnancy to protect the newborn infant.

If you or your doctor has a question about pertussis, please contact your school nurse or call the Pennsylvania Department of Health at 1-877-PA-HEALTH.

Thank you!

Dr. Donna M. Nugent