

Date October 1, 2015

Dear Parent/Guardian:

We have a reported case of pertussis (whooping cough) in one of our 2nd grade classes. Pertussis begins with cold symptoms and a cough that may become much worse over 1-2 weeks. People with pertussis may have a series of coughs followed by vomiting, turning blue, difficulty breathing or a high-pitched whoop. However, older children, adults and very young infants may not develop the whoop. There is generally no fever. The cough is often worse at night and cough medicines usually do not provide relief.

Please consider the following health department recommendations:

1. Keep individuals with a cough illness away from infants.
Infants under one year, and particularly under six months, are most likely to experience severe life-threatening illness from pertussis. Young infants should be kept away from people with a cough. If your infant is exposed to pertussis notify their physician without delay.
A doctor should promptly evaluate infants with any coughing illness.
2. Consider the new Tdap (Pertussis) vaccine for anyone who has not yet received it.
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recently recommended the tetanus-diphtheria-acellular pertussis (Tdap) booster for children age 11 years or older. In Missouri, this vaccine is required for school attendance beginning in 8th grade. Adults are also encouraged to receive a dose of Tdap to protect against pertussis. Please consult with your child's physician to ensure that their pertussis immunizations are current or to obtain a Tdap vaccine.
3. Seek medical help.
If your child comes down with cold symptoms that include a cough, talk to their doctor without delay. Explain that there has been a confirmed case of pertussis in your child's school. The following steps will help lower the chances of spreading the disease to others:
 - Get tested for pertussis (nasopharyngeal specimen) by your doctor
 - Start and complete antibiotic treatment for pertussis
 - Stay home until you have finished the first 5 days of antibiotics

Thank you for your assistance and please contact your school nurse or child's physician with any questions you may have.