



## HEALTH ALERT

Date: December 12, 2017

Subject: Pertussis Alert (Whooping Cough)

Since November 8, 2017 there have been **5** confirmed cases of **pertussis (whooping cough)** diagnosed in students within the Neillsville School District. Four of these students are in the high school.

### What Is It?

- Pertussis, also called whooping cough, is a disease caused by a bacteria that attaches to the lining of the lungs. At first a person may feel like they have a cold with a runny nose, low-grade fever and slight cough. After about a week, the person can start to have violent and dry coughing fits that can last a minute or longer. These fits can make it hard to breathe and a person may need to take a deep breath, which causes a "whooping" sound. Sometimes the coughing fits lead to vomiting. The disease is most serious in babies, elderly, and people with weakened immune systems.

### How Is It Spread?

- Pertussis is caused by a bacteria that can easily be spread from person to person. Babies can catch pertussis from anyone around them that holds or cares for the baby.
- The bacteria travels quickly through the air on droplets of saliva. It can be spread by coughing or sneezing, talking, sharing food or drink, kissing, or by spending time near an infected person. The droplets can be propelled through the air for distances of about 3 feet.
- A person infected with pertussis can spread pertussis 7 days before their cough starts and up to 21 days after their cough begins. If an infected person is treated with antibiotics, they are not contagious after the 5<sup>th</sup> day of taking their antibiotics (even though they may still be coughing).
- Students with confirmed pertussis will remain home and will not be allowed to be in school or participate in extracurricular activities until they are finished with the 5 day antibiotic treatment course.

### What Are The Signs and Symptoms?

- Early Symptoms:
  - Runny nose and occasional cough
- Later Symptoms
  - Fits of violent coughs that may be followed by a deep breath that makes a "whoop" sound or vomiting.
  - Coughing fits that make it hard to breath.

\*Influenza, colds, (upper respiratory infections), and pertussis symptoms might seem alike in the beginning stages. Please visit: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/immunization/pertussis.htm> to view a table that compares the symptoms for each illness. Click "General Information" and then "Is it a cold, flu, or pertussis."

\*If you are concerned about your child's cough, please contact your medical provider or call the health department.

### How Can Pertussis Be Prevented?

- The best way to prevent pertussis among babies, teens, and adults is to get vaccinated.
  - Children need 5 doses of DTaP (diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis) vaccine; the series is given at ages 2, 4, 6, and 15 months, and a booster between 4 and 6 years of age.
  - Teenagers should get the Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis) vaccine at age 11.
  - Pregnant women should receive 1 dose of Tdap during each pregnancy, preferably during the early part of gestational weeks 27-36, regardless of prior history of receiving Tdap.
  - Other adults should get at least one Tdap vaccine in their life.
  - Keep babies and other high-risk people away from people who are sick with pertussis.
  - Talk with your health care professional about getting vaccinated against pertussis.

**To prevent the spread of illness** →Wash hands often. →Cover your cough. →Stay home when sick.

**Make sure you and your family are up-to-date for pertussis vaccinations.** Please check with your child's medical provider or the Clark County Health Department regarding your child's vaccination status to see if your child is due for additional vaccinations. To find out our clinic hours or for more information please call 715-743-5105 or visit our website at [www.co.clark.wi.us/healthdepartment](http://www.co.clark.wi.us/healthdepartment). Additional information on pertussis is available at <http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/immunization/pertussis.htm>. Come "Like Us" on Facebook for health alerts/health information/health tips.