

January 26, 2015

Dear Parents/Guardians of a student at Prairie Central _____ :

Individuals have been identified in our community as having WHOOPING COUGH (also known as PERTUSSIS). Pertussis is a contagious, bacterial illness that is spread from person-to-person by droplet, direct contact with airborne respiratory secretions, or by indirect contact with articles soiled by the infected person's nose and throat discharges.

Information about Pertussis:

- Begins with upper respiratory symptoms, like a common cold with increasingly irritating cough. In one to two weeks the cough develops a characteristic "whoop" in young children and occurs in spasms (repeated violent coughs), sometimes followed by vomiting.
- The time between exposure to the disease and the appearance of the first signs of illness (incubation period) for Pertussis is between 5 and 21 days, commonly 7 to 10 days. The person is contagious just before the onset of cough until 3 weeks of coughing, unless treated with an appropriate antibiotic.
- Most children are protected against Pertussis with a Pertussis-containing vaccine prior to entering daycare and school. Pertussis immunity from the vaccine wanes starting 2-3 years after the last dose (kindergarten.) If your child's immunity is compromised by an illness, consult your doctor immediately.
- All people over 10 years old are susceptible to the disease; in adults, it presents as a bad cough at night lasting more than 1 week, which "over the counter" medication does not seem to help. Adolescents and adults may have a persistent cough without a "whoop", or persistent coughing at night.
- Infants and young children who have not been adequately vaccinated are at most serious risk of complications from Pertussis.

McLean County Health Department strongly recommends:

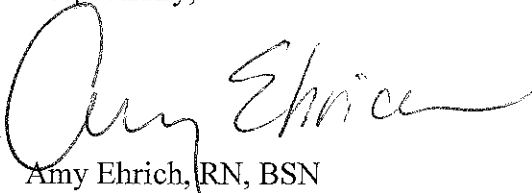
- Keeping your child at home and consulting medical care if they display any symptoms. Your doctor can diagnose the disease by ordering a PCR test from a nasopharyngeal swab.
- Notifying the school your child attends if diagnosed with suspected or confirmed Pertussis.

Illinois Department of Public Health Rules and Regulations for the Control of Communicable Disease requires:

- Cases of Pertussis and their household contacts must be excluded from school or daycare until at least 5 days after beginning antibiotic therapy.

Thank you for your cooperation regarding this important health matter. Please feel free to call McLean County Health Department at (309) 888-5435 regarding any question or concerns. Our office is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 12:00 pm and 1:00 pm to 4:30pm.

Respectfully,



Amy Ehrich, RN, BSN
Communicable Disease Investigator
McLean County Health Department