

## PERTUSSIS ALERT: Bedford High School and Bedford Junior High School

June 13, 2014

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Your child may have been exposed to pertussis (whooping cough). There has been a probable case of pertussis diagnosed at both Bedford High School and Bedford Junior High School. The Monroe County Health Department has seen pertussis cases in Monroe County. Pertussis is an infection that affects the airways and is easily spread from person to person by coughing or sneezing. Its severe cough can last for weeks or months, sometimes leading to coughing fits and/or vomiting. Anyone can get pertussis, but it can be very dangerous for infants and people with weakened immune systems. Family members with pertussis, especially mothers, can spread pertussis to newborns.

Recommendations:

1. If your child has a cough:
  - Keep your child home from school and activities, such as sports or play groups. See items 4 and 5 about when your child can return to these activities.
  - Make an appointment with your child's doctor as soon as possible and tell the doctor that your child may have been exposed to pertussis.
2. If your child has been told by a doctor that they have a weakened immune system ask your child's doctor to prescribe antibiotics to your child as soon as possible to prevent pertussis. Antibiotics should be given to a child with a weakened immune system if they may have been exposed to pertussis, even if he or she is not coughing.
3. If your child lives with any of the following people and may have been exposed to pertussis, ask your child's doctor to prescribe antibiotics as soon as possible to your child, even if he or she is not coughing:
  - A woman who is pregnant,
  - An infant younger than 12 months old, or
  - Anyone with a weakened immune system.
4. If your child has been diagnosed with pertussis by his or her doctor:
  - Tell the school that your child has been diagnosed with pertussis.
  - School officials may request that you keep your child home from school and activities, such as sports or play groups, until your child has been on antibiotics for five days to treat pertussis.
  - Ask your child's doctor for a note that states your child has pertussis.
5. If your child's doctor says your child does NOT have pertussis:
  - Ask for a note from the doctor telling the school that your child's cough is NOT pertussis and that your child can return to school and other activities at any time.

Please make sure your family's vaccinations are up-to-date. Protection against pertussis from the childhood vaccine, DTaP, decreases over time. Older children and adults, including pregnant women, should get a pertussis booster shot called "Tdap" to protect themselves and infants near or around them. If you need the Tdap vaccine, contact your doctor or call Monroe County Health Department at 734-240-7832 to find a vaccine provider near you.

**\*\*If you bring your child to a doctor for pertussis, please show the reverse side of this letter to him or her.\*\***

If you have any questions or concerns, please call the District Nurses at 734-850-6034.

Sincerely,

Roxann Satkowski & Karen Weis, District Nurses

Dear Health Care Provider:

Your patient may have been exposed to pertussis.

**For Exposed Patients without Symptoms:**

As a precaution to protect vulnerable individuals, we are recommending antibiotic prophylaxis for this patient if he or she shares a household with a woman who is pregnant or an infant less than 12 months old. Alternatively, this patient is being referred to you because he or she has an immunodeficiency or lives with a person with an immunodeficiency and may require antibiotic prophylaxis to help prevent pertussis.

**For Exposed Patients with Symptoms:**

As Monroe County Health Department continues to work with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), we have developed the following guidelines for assessing and treating patients at this time:

**For patients coughing <21 days:**

1. Collect nasopharyngeal swabs or aspirate for pertussis PCR testing and/or culture.
2. Do not delay treatment with appropriate antibiotics while waiting for laboratory results if there is if no alternative diagnosis.
3. Document and communicate all clinical decisions related to pertussis to the school (this includes children for whom pertussis has been ruled out).
4. Strongly consider antibiotic prophylaxis for all household members if a pregnant woman, an infant less than 12 months old, or anyone with a weakened immune system lives in the household.

**For patients coughing ≥21 days:**

1. Testing for pertussis is not recommended. Testing after 3 weeks of cough is of limited benefit since PCR and culture are only sensitive during the first 2-3 weeks of cough when bacterial DNA is still present in the nasopharynx.
2. Treatment is no longer necessary after 21 days, with the following exception: infants and pregnant women in their third trimester should be treated up through 6 weeks after cough onset.
3. The patient is no longer infectious and can return to school.

**For all households:** Administer Tdap vaccine to contacts 11 years and older who have not been previously vaccinated with Tdap, or refer for vaccination to Monroe County Health Department at 734-240-7832.

Additional clinical and laboratory guidance may be found on the CDC website: <http://www.cdc.gov/pertussis>

Should you have any questions or concerns, please call Monroe County Health Department at 734-240-7832 or the District Nurses at Bedford Public Schools at 734-850-6034.

Sincerely,

Roxann Satkowski & Karen Weis, District Nurses